

THE HOUSE  
OF CARDS



JOHN HEIGH





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THE HOUSE OF CARDS







# THE HOUSE OF CARDS

*A RECORD*

BY

JOHN HEIGH, *psued.*  
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*Sometime Major U.S.V.*

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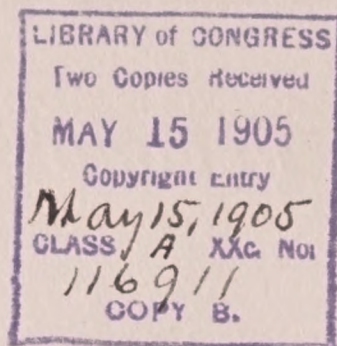
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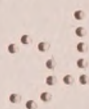
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TO LINSEY ATILA CARDS, Esquire

OF THE HOUSE

*Reckon always upon the stupidity of persons and the intractability of things; that is philosophy. Recognize the exceptions; that is business. So runs your terse maxim, my dear Cards; and if the disguise of this name which I give you seems ridiculously thin; if the serviceable but ancient mask of sentimental bachelor, which I assume, fails to hide a face scarred with marks of many a literary indiscretion; and if, finally, it appears the limit of presumption for me to hint that your successful and illustrious career makes only the mightier menace to our civic existence, — it is all because I am emboldened by your own maxim to take that chance of exceptions and win a desperate game. I always love and often honour you; I despise, I fear, I detest, the House which you have built. Lay the axe to its foundations, and you will be the greatest patriot in history.*

JOHN HEIGH.







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I

THE HOUSE TRIUMPHANT







# THE HOUSE OF CARDS

## I

THE name is commonplace enough, and unmeaning besides; the pun is obvious. I hate the obvious. But my cheerful young friend had put questions to me.

“What is in this old quarry here, Major Heigh?”

“Memories,” said I. “We’ll dig some up....” But he parried.

“What’s the castle yonder?”

And then it was that I sneered out the poor, punning, hackneyed phrase. “That? That is the House of Cards! Down on your knees, boy, and sing, *My country, 'tis of thee.*”

“Ah,” says my young friend, and again, “Oho!” — not incisively; but it is for me to say things now. I begin with the finances of the House, rounding my lips to the size of the figures, and chirping little audacities of comment on the ways and means, seasoning it all with that grim humour which you have doubtless noted over my signature — J. H. — in the



*Commonwealth.* Then I pull up, abruptly, I suppose, and display a dignified reticence. I am no gossip, I. Cards is my friend; and I particularly detest this gabble about rich men from some Mrs. Quickly in trousers. Who knows, moreover, when gentlemen of the high finance will have a little Bastille of their own, and our pliant governor will issue snug *lettres-de-cachet*? A promoter, did you say, Cards? Not at all. He reorganizes railways and things; one railway I know he has reorganized three times; and these rejuvenated concerns have been very grateful to him. He is rich beyond all decent guessing, educated, stately in port, my friend of fifty years; and I regard him as the most dangerous man in America.

“A politician, is he? I didn’t know....”

“Nonsense! He despises politics, — and that is why he is the most dangerous man in America.”

Again it is “Ah” and “Oho” from my young friend, who is no better than an Englishman; but I can see that he is duly impressed with my epigrammatic way of talk. He shall read my letters in the *Commonwealth*. Just now, however, I am to tell him about Cards. Yes, Cards is “a plain man of business,” his own rating; and wears his great honours, as he has borne his faculties, very meekly indeed. Yet, if I were playing Shakespeare with him, I should



certainly not call him Duncan; not Macbeth either; Cæsar, some would say: but I am by no means sure. He asks no crown of any political origin, whatever his actual power in finance and the great industrial world. He deplores, sincerely as I think, the rule of low politicians; rails with me, now and then, at our futile democracy; and how he does hate to go on foot by the Wager Building, here in Philadelphia, and have that dissolute group of bosses and ward-healers salute him by name! Yet if one thing can stir his wrath more than politics, it is reform. Responsible in what he calls his "fiduciary capacity" as director of banks and trusts, he points out the sickening folly of men who invite reprisals from our lords of the ballot; he sends his big cheque to Ganewood, Overlord Ganewood, who holds all the little lords in leash; and no doubt some of those fellows at the Wager Building are jingling his money in their pockets as he goes haughtily by. No, Cards will not meddle with politics or with reform; and the politicians all extol him for his fidelity to that first commandment with promise for every American man of affairs: "Thou shalt do no public service." I am glad, however, that they made his son and namesake accept high diplomatic honours abroad; that is safe employment, and full of dignity; and young



Linsey discharges the duties of his position with efficiency and grace. I could wish, indeed, that a like ambition to shine in foreign parts would possess another son, Horace, whom we call "sporting Hod," and whom some of us would willingly contemplate through the haze of one or more severing seas.—Oh, he apologized humbly for the cigar trick, — yes, yes: I have forgiven and forgot... forgiven long ago....

"By Jove, though, Windsor Castle sings small to that, now!"

"Doesn't it?" — I am proud of our suburbs. Confound it all, Cards built his house with honest money, not with the dirty stuff that went to the founding of...never mind. Yes, it is a fine place. And we look at its solid walls, and the turrets, and the long gardens and lawns before it, the woods behind, and, by their border, great brick stables with a clock-face we can almost read from here. The golf grounds lie this side of the House, taking in the stone mansion where my Uncle Charles once lived. How he would stare at those young men tossing down a "highball" as they dress in his old-fashioned room, at senile Putter discussing his strokes, at Niblack swearing over adverse luck!—Did *we* never swear, you ask? Well...yes. Yes. But it was mellow, racy, adventurous, our swearing; the ten commandments were in force, and one



took one's eternal future in one's hand. — Yet how fair it all looks to-day! The rolling country, drained, hedged, bright with these red-coated or white-flannelled folk, and loud with cheerful oath or laugh; and here at our feet a smooth road, echoing to riders who trot back from polo, and suddenly enlivened by a big four-in-hand, — no common sight nowadays. Observe the triple-plate English groom! "Observe the men and women, — particularly that young whip. That's Elbert-Kelley; pronounce *Elbare*. They *did* try Quellay, with a 'de,' — Gascon founder, and eclipse under the Albert Kelley cloud and the mills...."

But my comrade, civilly enough, cuts me short. Who was the girl, he hastens to inquire, in the fetching tan suit, who was sitting as far from Master Elbert-Kelley as space would permit, and who nodded so gaily, with such superfluous cordiality, one might put it, to me? Ho, ho! To think that I am standing here by the old quarry and telling a Waltham Eliot that all unconsciously he has been looking at a Kriemhild... this time, Kriemhild Cards! Oh, my whirligig of time! Ho, ho!

"*Kriemhild*? Deuce of a name! And you laugh at us Yankees for our Samanthas and Patiences! Yet I seem to remember..."

"Yet you seem to remember..."



"Ah, of course. My uncle's wife!"

"Sagacious, intelligent boy! Both Kriemhilds are extant; this is one of them; and you shall know both before another sunrise. — Now come home to dinner."

"Kriemhild Cards. Of course. But she must be just out?"

"She is."

"I thought the entire flock was out, far out, and up, too, — *so high!*" He raised his hand in the familiar gesture.

"The others are. Lin must be getting on to forty, the diplomatic Lin. And Horace, though some years younger, is already writ large in the records. Come! He was at Harvard! Never heard of Horace?"

"Oh! Shuffle Cards! Well, I should think so. Among the Dickey.... But I'm just a bit too late for any contemporary knowledge of Shuffle's active career. I've heard of it, though." — Waltham Eliot smiled, and I grinned.

"Major, is she engaged?"

"Who?"

"Now, Major! The lass in tan, to be sure."

"No. She's waiting for a duke, or a prince of the blood, I suppose. Now come along to dinner."

"The old man is a terror, — Cards Senior?"

"Gentle as a dove, — at home. A child can



play with him. But ware a bout with him at the office, my lad. Better hand over your assets at the start. He's generous. But if you scent of a newspaper, and he once thinks 'reporter,' why, pray that your flight be in the winter so that you may dive into the first snowbank! — But he'll like *you*." — I looked a moment at the smooth, strong face, the clear eye, the bigness of the frame, and the sureness of the pose, the whole effect of sanity, alertness, honesty, force, health. — "He'll like you. Well, who wouldn't?"

"Thank you!"

"No. Don't thank me. Behave yourself when I present you this evening to my lord and my lady, and to my young lady. Do you hear, sir? — And now," — I stamped my foot as we Heighs do when we mean business, — "now come home to dinner, or you'll get none." We are a rough, hardy, plain-speaking breed.

It was only the preceding day that I stood on my piazza, with the westering sun in front of me, and used strong language to a smooth-tongued politician with a G.A.R. badge on his coat and his mouth full of tobacco and flattery. I didn't ask him in; no apothecary's civet or other remedy could have sweetened the room for a month. I didn't even look at the fellow, as he stood there, but blinked painfully into the



sunset, — and spoke my mind. He had been a bounty-jumper in the old days of the war; and I remember refusing to let him enlist in my company. Now he is great-man's great-man to our county boss; and he is very strong on G.A.R. posts and pensions. He had me expelled from the local post — once named after me — because I broke up a dirty political "deal"; and he assured my old soldiers that I "wouldn't mind." One of them, on whose little farm I held a mortgage with five years' interest unpaid, relying on this assurance, told me that the vote of expulsion was a mere formality that should make no difference at all in my blend of mercy and justice. And here now is the source of all the trouble; he smiles obsequiously, hat in hand, remarking in his easy, rural-politics style that there need be no hard feelings, and asks me for my indispensable signature on a certificate to get a pension, a fat pension, for the biggest coward in my command. The fellow had contracted heart-disease in running away from battle. This time, however, our satrap finds my language too impetuous even for his tried suavity of intercourse, and goes away sorrowful; while I turn wrathfully around and make straight for my doorway, only to see the imperturbable Bridget, with a card in her hand, waiting my leisure, and a brisk young fellow standing near the piazza step, his head averted to



conceal something very like laughter; he motions the driver of a crazy station-wagon to bide for further orders. I had not noted any wagon, any servant, any visitor, during my harangue; and there is no doubt that I am growing old. I look at the card; I look at the young man; and I nearly topple over into my rhododendrons. Bridget interprets my facial transformations. "Bring up the gentleman's coat and umbrella, Danny," she says; "and yez can take back the man with the copper button. We'll trade." — Bridget now and then abuses her privilege as an old bachelor's old servant.

But we sit down, this athletic, bronzed young fellow and I, in the library, — the plain, comfortable, high-studded room where my father, one summer night long ago, read to my mother about Colonel Newcome, while I stood listening on the piazza....

"You look like him," I say, alluding to my old friend and companion-in-arms whose name this youngster bears. "You look like him, — and you don't. The resemblance knocks one down with surprise; you saw me reel like an actor, just now, eh? But the difference picks one up again, — though slowly, slowly. I'm not sure I am picked up quite yet. You're bigger, stockier; your face is ampler, or else it's the new smooth-shave *versus* old moustache. You



youngsters are plausible and cheeky where we were bearded, mysterious, and romantic, — eh? You're too big, too jocular and frivolous, for girls of my day, with romance in their dear little hearts. Confound you cool, matter-of-fact, rising generation, anyhow, — eh?"

"Oh, come, Major Heigh!"

"Yes. But after all, it is the same face as it is the same name. I'll chance the heart, too. Don't mind my talk. My name is Bear. I growl and frighten people; but I am a good bear all the same. Welcome to the old den, and make it your own, my dear boy.... Waltham Eliot! Let me see. The brother was... Winthrop, — a tot of a lad, — 'Winny.' Ah, I remember. I remember."

"My father, Major Heigh. And I am the Benjamin of his offspring. They gave me my uncle's name. I have been taught to think it a responsibility."

"It's close upon fifty years ago, young fellow. He used to sit where you sit now, and talk to my mother with that foreign accent and that fine courtesy, — boy that he was. How my mother liked him! How she used to tell me *that* was the friend for me, — not the farmer boys, not even Cards. She never liked Cards very much. She... Waltham Eliot the second, *I like you!*"



This was my abrupt way; but the young fellow looked at me with that honest sympathy in his face which I could remember so well in the uncle. I was lapsing down huge *glissades* of sentiment. It wouldn't do at all.

"Eliot," I said very gruffly, "I remarked that I liked you. What of that,—eh? I can do young men no good. I'm a crusty fellow of the sort they used to call Mugwump. I abuse our constituted rulers. I write stinging letters (unpaid) to the *Commonwealth*, and I contemplate life as a Hole. I once belonged to our volunteer forces in the civil war; but that is over long since, and I have just joined another command. Maybe you don't know it,—you're not quite old enough; it's Shakespeare's Sixty-sixth Sonneteers.... No, you are not eligible until you're past forty. It's the Tired Regiment. Look up that sonnet some day, my lad. We are all tired, honestly tired; tired of the Patriots-for-what's-in-it; tired of this sensual American life grinning and winking through a mask of conventional piety and morals and law; tired of a tainted government, an exploded democracy; tired... Oh, *you* are tired, eh? Well, most of that is from one of my letters. I bore you, eh? You want to take the next train?"

"Not at all, Major, not at all. Only you..."



—“Are a whining, dyspeptic, cross-grained misanthropic old bachelor, — a sorehead. — Well, so I am frequently told. But see, — did you ever know a man who really loved his country and did not heartily hate many of his countrymen?”

“I’m not past forty.”

“Quite right, too, dear boy! Put it off as long as you can. Stick to your ideals and your business and your poetry — and, of course, your sweetheart.”

“Ah, Major, — why are *you* a bachelor?”

“So kind women ask me now and then. Youngster, I fear I can do you no good. I repeat it. I am of an old and pretty sound stock, and incidentally I own some stocks also pretty old and pretty sound; therefore people tolerate me. But I am a marked man. I smoke foul old pipes.... No, keep your eyes on me; I like it. But you’re not in a good light; probably it’s the glasses; and then Squire Ditchwater, out there, got on my nerves. — I’ll telephone now for your trunk. — Letters, eh? Oh, — after a while, after a while. It’s your face, my thane of Boston, that I’m reading now. And you are my guest for a long pull; remember that. What are your plans?”

“Well, sir, my father died just before the boom came along, and he thought he was nearly ruined.”



“Too honest, eh?”

“I don’t like to think so. But a lot of stocks he had marked ‘trash’ — copper, you know, and all that, — flew up to par while the executor was gaping at them. It was all sold and reinvested; mother and the girls are happy in Boston. But Boston is no place for a young lawyer.” — The boy reminded me of his uncle, fifty years ago, talking about his travels and Harvard College and Mr. Emerson. — “Between you and me, Major Heigh, I think people are more than half right when they say that Boston is side-tracked.” He spoke in a soft, reverential voice, but firmly, like a devoted churchman who has at last concluded to give up the Athanasian creed. “It’s a great place still; no better city to live in and to be born in; I’m loyal enough. But for an active business career, for the lawyer, — no. My friends made for New York; but that idea is not so obvious as it looks. Corporation law is my special line. Corporations are responsible for our greatness as well as for our corruption; and remedies must come from corporation law. Well, sir, where is the heart of corporations if not here in Pennsylvania?”

“You know your Boston, judge. Well, do you know your Philadelphia? Are you minded to be honest like your forebears, and do you want to go to Heaven when you die, and all that sort of



thing, — and do you take stop-over privileges in Philadelphia ? ”

“ An honest man can always find honest business.”

I gave him my “ Ho, ho ! ” in largest capitals.

“ Well,” he conceded, for my “ Ho, ho ! ” in that manner is nearly always fatal to the interlocutor, “ Oh, well, politics apart, I’m for law and hard work ; I only ask a fair field.”

“ Ask it,” I said. I am the very deuce in argument. “ Ask it. Do you expect a fair field here, if any money is to be made ? Business is rotten ; and law is a little more rotten than business ; and both of them have telephone connection, — and not long-distance, either, my son, — with politics. Don’t ‘ politics apart ’ me ! Politics aren’t apart. They’re served with every dish we eat. Why, when I was writing my articles for the *Commonwealth* about our local bosses, they were going to condemn one of my fields yonder and put up the county pest-house on it. But Cards and Malstrem stepped in then ... Hang it, Cards *is* a good friend. — But, — politics apart ! Sho !! ”

“ Well, Major Heigh, I’ll put up a stiff fight ; why shouldn’t I ? I’m five-and-twenty. I have a thousand or two a year — and some law. Plenty of clothes, cheek, and appetite. There you have me, Major.”



I looked at him. "I have you, eh? Well, I'll hold you. Come see your room, — after I've sent for that trunk."

So it came to pass that in the late September afternoon I stood with another Waltham Eliot on our hill by the old quarry, and watched the light flooding rich and warm over that great House of Cards. And the same night we made our call.



## II

“JUST say a friend, — a young friend. Major Heigh and a young friend, — eh ?”

Cards's man, who knows my ways, smiled respectfully ; and I, who did not know quite enough of my young friend's ways as yet, glanced at him, ready to hearten him if there were need. Most men clear the throat, and make little gestures indicating great ease of manner, before they go into the presence ; but Waltham Eliot was evidently afraid neither of Cards nor of anybody else. He looked about him, and expressed some measure of approbation in regard to the drawing-room, — to me a rather frigid region, — as the smooth-gliding John reappeared and bade us follow him to the library. “All right, John,” I said ; “I know. That will do.”

I like stage effects. Just beyond the broad doorway the lights burned brightest, falling cannily upon our entrance. Cards, that jet-black hair and heavy moustache now gone almost white, but with the keen dark eye of his youth, the square set of jaw and mouth, the



sense of something deliberately indomitable exhaling from his poise and manner, was in such ease as a man of his make could ever assume; he smoked placidly, looking through the great bay-window at a vague world of night, with a coffee-cup on the little table at his side and two newspapers slipped down to his feet. For all his repose, he was activity in statue; cut like a cameo, one would better say, against that background of dull, rich colour, — the stretch of heavy rugs, the books, and a fine picture here and there in seeming shadow. His wife, white, too, in her splendid wealth of hair, but with her superb complexion unimpaired by time, her violet eyes that looked as if they made this concession of colour to her beauty, but not to her character, her figure still suggestive of the strength and grace of youth, sat by a shaded drop-light on the library table and read *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*. Kriemhild the younger, who, if she had come into Fenimore Cooper's pages, would have been "the other female, occupied with a piece of needlework," was occupied with nothing but the fox-terrier at her feet, alert for a bark at the visitors and very prettily restrained by his mistress's uplifted finger. She looked couthie, as the Scotch say, and was not without her own alertness to examine the "young friend" at better advantage than from the top of a coach. She



was blindingly handsome,—in fact, the best-looking girl I ever saw, except one; and she had charm: some day I will filch Eliot's diary, if I can, and give you all the adjectives. Mine are no good; you see, I have always known her mother.

The terrier barked. Cards blinked, turning his gaze from the night-scene of the lawn. "Come in, John," he said, with the capitalist drawl in his voice. Mrs. Cards laid aside her book; and she said, "Come in, John," too,—in her own old-family accent. Remark that it is something to have two persons like them say "John" at all; it is better than my own better's sometime *Sir John with all Europe*. And, best of the bunch, "Good work, Uncle John," came from the young woman. To be sure, none of the home group looked at *me*. I pushed my companion gently to the fore, as host and hostess rose to greet us; there he stood, the light full on his face and his figure.—You know how dress brings out the gentleman, and somehow betrays the cad?—My friends saw a gentleman; and they saw something more. Ruddy and keen and full of life as he was, they, nevertheless, saw a ghost. "Ho, ho!" I boomed out; and the daughter, never surprised at any eccentricity of mine, was clearly non-plussed at the behaviour of her parents.



“Ha, Linsey,” I said, stepping forward; “Oho, Kriemhild, — no need to name names, eh? Well, for form — I present Mr. Waltham Eliot, late of Boston. He’s come to settle in Philadelphia, live on law, and be honest.... Let us make his *visit*... pleasant.”

It was not too delicate a trick for me to play this banker and his wife. The amazing likeness of young Eliot’s face meant for each of them the quintessence of deepest problems, the sentence of recapitulation which in some lives covers a whole library of action and comment. Cards was the more visibly affected. He mastered his emotion fast enough; but it was transmuted into a strange tenderness of look, an underplay of genuine sentiment that rang again in the formal words of his welcome. Nobody, I think, had ever seen Cards hold a man’s hand the second or two overtime that we noted now, — his daughter with sheer amazement. She was not instructed in this chapter of the family chronicles....

I had slipped over to her as her father grasped the young man’s hand, and I gave her my customary gentle pinch of the ear, — a habit, I believe, peculiar to myself and the first Napoleon. The adorable girl put her arm in mine and leaned against my shoulder; I had on my large steel-rimmed spectacles; my face, all “chopped with tanned antiquity,” wreathed itself into a



bless-you-my-children smile; and we were a noticeable group.

"What's got into Daddy, Uncle John? Look!"

"Shh," said I, impressively. "Don't spoil scenes."

"Mr. Eliot," Cards was saying, "the Spaniards, I believe, are wont to offer their houses and all they own to a welcome guest. I am not very keen about visitors, and nobody accuses me of exaggerated courtesy; but I mean it when I tell you that you are absolutely at home in my house."

"Show him, then," I remarked drily, as I led the girl a pace or two forward, "the best thing you've got in the house, by my way of thinking." And I made my little jest about an engagement of long standing between us; and the little jest was duly recognized; then the presentation was made, and for ten minutes there prevailed the inevitable adjustments of times, persons, events. Cards remembered the deceased Winthrop so thoroughly. "How he cried when they told him the war would be over before he could enlist! I used to read his first Latin to him, in college days. Why have I heard nothing, . . . but I see little of my old Boston friends now. I went up to commencement the other year; and I hardly knew my classmates. I recollect that old Chuckle, as we called him, was excited over



the prohibition of whisky-punch in the rooms! It was uncanny. Every corner — our room was in Holworthy — reminded me of your uncle... and here this old keg droned on about his punch! I went off to Boston and talked railroads all the afternoon, — to get sentiment out of my head.”

“Your sentiment took the approved Harvard form, sir, in that splendid...”

“Oh, *that*. Yes, I named it after your uncle. My dear Mr. Eliot, it was no exaggeration when I told them that your uncle took me to Harvard, and Harvard gave me all I needed and could never have found elsewhere.”

“Daddy, I’ve known you, lo these many years; and I’ve never had before such materials for the biography of L. A. Cards...”

“Nonsense, my dear. But I *am* chattering vilely. It’s your face, Mr. Eliot, that makes me so sentimental. They’ve told you how much you look like him?”

“It seems to strike you and Major Heigh particularly, — though I’ve heard of it before. As I said to the Major, it means a heavy responsibility....” He waited a fraction of a pause, as if for permission, and changed the subject with some remarks on common friends addressed to the junior Kriemhild. Evidently the young fellow, in his kind heart, thought of the odd relation which he bore to the mother; thought



of her sensations at all this revival of the past. We were grateful to him.... In fact, Cards started visibly, as if he had just come to the idea. Friendship, you see, outlasts the most resolute and desperate loves; and Cards had been taken by surprise at the sight of this reproduction of one who had been his only friend. Somehow we sundered into two groups. Cards and I smoked; and Mrs. Cards, whose eyes still had that dreamy look which could have been noted in mine, save for the large, steel-rimmed spectacles, came close to us on pretence of showing me something in her book.... "Can any human being parse that sentence?" she inquired. I didn't answer. She didn't want any answer. Nor does any sentence written by Mr. George Meredith need parsing. Instinctively we three fell to talking of oldest times,—when we were girl and boys here; and we looked indulgently over at the young people chatting so easily and frankly. A benediction was in the air; it was one of those rare moments when life, for a whim, turns from tiger to kitten and rolls about for us, and purrs, and lets us feel how harmless are its claws. Here we were again! There was our good Waltham Eliot of old — by deputy. Only where was Clayton? Where was *his* deputy? They order these things better at the château in the French novel. If only the *domestique* — Jean,



thou son of County Kerry, where art thou, *mon brave*? —if only Jean-John would announce one more visitor, and if that pale, melancholy man with a southern accent could enter... Nonsense! Clayton the younger is now at least seven-and-thirty; he wears a chin-beard in the occidental fashion, and lives in Kansas City, and has a large family, and is an official in what they call the Beef Trust. Cards got him the job. Cards can do anything for anybody. He can be a most useful friend; and so I told young Waltham Eliot, as we paced home in the moonlight.

He was dreamily terse and laconic; my seeds of judicious discussion, my Horatian maxims, fell upon the rocks. I thought of my Virgil then, and my Dr. Johnson, and remembered who it is that is to be found amid the rocks: who but Love? This, indeed, is your modern pace; four hours or so, no more, and a stalwart fellow is gone beyond hope of rescue!

We came silently home, and the young man went to bed; and I sat down for my letter to the *Commonwealth*. Over my head in the guest-chamber, as we used to call it, was the sound of footsteps, and then quiet; I knew. He was smoking a cigarette by the window and baring his heart to the moon. Truly, now, in my youth, I too, John Polonius Heigh... but not so swiftly,



not in this diurnal consummation!—I can't write; no acid will trickle from my pen; and I heartily curse the *Commonwealth*. 'Tis a dyspeptic sheet; and love, not sarcasm, even in my choice brand of it, makes the world go around. Besides, they sent back my last communication. A little sherry will do me good. Yes, I will take a little sherry. I move slowly to the sideboard in my old dining room, and turn on the light....

When at last I rouse myself to go to bed, I find that I am sitting by the table, with a sort of imbecile sympathy in my face, and staring at one of those fascinating pictures of a young man and a young woman, palpably sprung from the highest possible families, with every accessory of wealth and beauty, and in the most correct of evening attire, who smile at each other over a piano. Enchanter! Noble and altruistic sheet, how much better than the *Commonwealth's* are thy merits and thy circulation! How many a kitchen, how many a mechanic's parlour dost thou cheer, not only with those resplendent pictures, but with thy advice about gloves at a reception or the nice conduct of an afternoon tea when one entertains a Roumanian nobleman! Tired souls, dulled by toil over type-writer, sewing-machine, ledger, thou refreshest with certitude of correctness when they shall pay that private



visit to the White House, or perchance be commanded to dinner at Windsor Castle. Thou layest bare the heart of the flunkey, and the butler has no secrets from thee. Yes, Bridget has left her copy of *The Home Comforter* when she cleared up the room after our modest meal. And my eyes are glued this half-hour gone to yonder hypnotic picture. Smile on, young people, smile unintelligently on! John Heigh gives you his blessing, and remembers the gist of it all as set forth long ago:—

Ein Mann, ein Weib; ein Weib, ein Mann:  
Tristan, Isolt; Isolt, Tristan!

Ho, ho!—Ah!—Ah me!



### III

THAT formula of the old German is right, and allows for leap-year withal; but the modern method by which youth works it out is by no means to my taste. I wanted to watch this young love of my two pets blossom slowly, shily, tenderly, to full flower; it should be my own vicarious wooing, my autumnal rose. How I should bless them, I thought, bidding them not to fear their awful felicity, safe in the harbour of a decorous betrothal after an Odyssey of hopes and doubts and many tremblings of their lot in the balances of fate! And, oh, the disillusion, the brutal frankness of courtship that flaunted its unwavering assurance of success in steady acceleration for the month that followed! These young people of to-day! This modern love! Cock-sure stripling, swinging lightly from his horse, or ruddy with a bout of tennis; athletic, muscular girl, with her stride and laugh and frank cry to Billy or Dick or...or Waltham, without a blush at the blunt, familiar name! He can tie the very laces of her tennis-shoe and never tremble once; she can tip his flannel hat awry,



meanwhile, with careless touch of a racket....  
Gods of my amorous youth !

Thank you, indeed, Cards ; I am delighted at your proposal that we should drive together to the stock-farm this late October afternoon, and see your sleek cattle and your brawny draught-horses and your light victors of the speedway. I know a good horse, Banker, and had that lore long before you dreamed of it ; but my main affair is to get this congenital disease of romance once and for all out of my system, to banish afar memories of the young man of my day, who was wont to go pale and red by turns at sight of Her, to quote Byronic verses in a quivering, soulful voice, to look at her furtively and sigh, — yes, my lords, yes, and even to make that little lyric of his own and send it unsigned to flutter a duet with her heart as she reads, holding it in unsteady hands there in her virginal, white-curtained room or by the roses at twilight in the long garden walk. — Come out of the garden, Maud ! Romance is dead....

Ay, touch up your horses, Cards ; let us hurry to the stock-farm. Breeding is the word. America is a stock-farm ; our own President says it. — And Cards wonders at my mood ; wonders that I jerk out my crude paradoxes ; wonders that I say a bad word three several times, I, who hold it vulgar and ridiculous to swear. True, Cards



himself says something between his teeth as a big red devil of an automobile — hybrid word for a hybrid thing begotten and beloved of a hybrid brummagem breed of sports — with a measly little pavid parvenu of an owner, and his fireman (*chauffeur* indeed! I say “fireman,” and be burned to him!), snorts up and sets our horses to a dance. You’ve heard, you say, that story about me and Master Elbert-Kelley and my pistol? Oh, it’s exaggerated, — exaggerated. But I did scare him, and that’s a fact. He is very profuse, is Quellay now, with greetings and fine-days and stand-still-as-long-as-you-likes. Cards nods a contemptuous recognition, and I grin broadly; and we dash by. My satiric vein is set running now; I feel better after a glimpse at that pasty face; and I tell Cards why poetry is dead.

“And does your girl have cocktails and cigarettes in her room for visitors? Oh, well, I know *she* doesn’t. I speak generically. But you are behind the times, Linsey,—behind the times.” Cards laughs. Then he grows serious.

“John,” he confides, while the horses trot steadily up a long, gradual slope of the turnpike, “that young friend of ours has been here a matter of six weeks; and I like him more and more.”

“Oh, he’ll do. He’ll do. Our automobile hero, there, Elbert-Kelley, of Kelley, cadet,” — I stop a



moment reverently and touch my hat, while Cards indulges in a laugh, — “says so himself. Final authority. Ever see him at golf, Cards? Note him next time, and see how cad and caddy match, except in clothes, — red-headed aliens both, and be hanged to him as less of a gentleman than his comrade. Well, he has applied his highest test of gentility, and is positive that Eliot never wears detachable wristbands — ‘what they call cuffs, don’t-you-know?’ You remember that old Albert Kelley never wore detachable wristbands, Cards? Quite so. Yes, Eliot will do. But what will he do with law? That’s my problem.”

“Why?”

“He is so terribly at ease in Zion. Why, Linsey, I never see him plunging into the books with a wet towel round his head. He disappoints me. I wanted to read in the papers his great constitutional argument; to go and listen to him pleading against old George H. — eh? — and raising the devil as Judge Caraway used to do in our time. But he’s always dictating to his stenographer when I drop in at his office, or talking accounts with some peddling merchant, . . . it sounds more like business than law.”

“Ho,” said Cards, “that is where he shows his sense. Law is all business now, John. He’ll do. I got Peedle to give him an insurance case.”



"You think the root of the matter is in him? Well. *You* know."

"He'll go far. Brilliant—and steady, like these horses of mine. I need him in my work. Only he's got this abnormal young-man idea about fighting the politicians. If he gets marked as a crank and reform lawyer, his day's done. John, I can't put the thing to him straight; I don't want to seem so anxious, either. You do it. Tell him to stick to straight business law and let politics alone."

"Can he?"

"Reasonably,—yes. And you are reasonable at heart, John—he'll hear you. This is our Waltham Eliot's nephew,—another Waltham. It makes me shudder, sometimes, to see the likeness,—ways, speech,—you know. See, John, say this,—say it's what you heard me give as my philosophy of the whole thing, as it really is. Corporations are the only means of handling these immense business concerns nowadays, and they are creatures of state or city. State and city are run by the politicians. They make it their business. I've watched all this reform; once or twice I've helped; but it came to nothing. Tell Eliot that a man of his ability and character can make anything in this world,—money, fame, reputation,—but he can't make our political life better by assailing the politicians.



It can't be done. Indirectly, inside the corporation fence, he can do something; outside, he'll only unmake himself. For God's sake, Heigh, don't let the boy ruin himself by this reform. John, I... I love that boy."

The words look tame; but if you had seen Cards when he said them, this cold, hard arbiter of finance, this inscrutable man of affairs! — Perhaps he thought of the display. "Tell him," he said more coolly, "tell him to hold his tongue and work, until he knows all his facts."

"How is he going to know them?"

"Ah!" — Cards pondered awhile. "If I could just souse him into it head over heels, — make him see the whole show at close range! — I have it!" The banker nodded, fixed his idea; then looked up, changing the subject. "Let's enjoy this gorgeous afternoon," he said. "Now, speaking of poetry," — he gazed suggestively into the landscape, — "ay, speaking of poetry," he repeated with sudden interest, "look ahead of you."

We were bowling along the old County Line; and the fairest of valleys lay stretched far below us, seen through a vista of the forest trees nearly arching over our heads. Chestnut and maple were bare; but brown leaves clung to the oaks, and the sun slanting through them made a colour richer than any green of spring. Autumn talks



in Ben Ezra's phrase even to the old, and tells them the best is yet to be, — that is, if one grows old with a grace. But I did not think of growing old. Sharp wine of the air rushed into my lungs and said youth; and youth was incorporate a few yards before us in the attractive shapes of Eliot and Kriemhild Cards, stepping along in the most exact rhythm, shoulder to shoulder, with the intimacy of short phrases, silences, an occasional glance and nod. — Well, well, this was at last the right way of man with maid as we knew it in my youth, and as all youth has known it since the solitary was set... no, not that: say since Eden bowers. That was the style of 1855. Bless you, after all, my children! I should certainly speak to Eliot as Cards had hinted. And I should revise my opinions of modern love. What a carping, sour old beggar I am!...

— “Why do you look at me like that, Uncle John?” The surprise was over; we had pulled up beside them; Cards was chatting with Waltham, and I had been steadily gazing at young Kriemhild.

“Because I owe your sex and your generation an apology, my dear!” — All the rest I had to say was in a further look as I held the hand she gave me. She understood me; she does not mind my big, steel-rimmed spectacles; she was



willing, I think, for me and for nobody else, to see the new light in her eyes....

"Yes, sir," Eliot was saying, "we won the case. Clear, clean work all through. Courtesy and fair dealing from everybody. What a fine judge Duquesne is! They tell me the city judges are a good set, too, — mainly."

"I congratulate you," said Cards. "Look here, Eliot. I want you to see the other side, know the worst, and make up your mind — in time; you must take time, — how bad the worst is. I have the scheme. Come to my golf dinner on Friday."

"Oh, — *Daddy!*"

"But yes, my dear. Yes, Eliot; and John, *you* bring him. Every year or so I give a dinner — the golf is humorous — to all the republicans and sinners of these parts. Politicians, — the big ones, that is, — promoters, judges, railroad men, whatsoever maketh and loveth a dollar in the grand style. And I throw in a few clergymen, literary men, and John Heighs for a makeweight. But it's the politicians and promoters that I wish you to meet. You'll need stout gloves when you shake hands with some of them; but what of that? My dutiful daughter, there, is making a face. Well, she and Mrs. Cards always flee to the city or to Lakewood for that brief season. This is not



their affair,—and they really know nothing about it. Only men, of course. The Major will prime you for the occasion,—eh, John? That will be Friday night. On the Tuesday after,—election night, isn't it? However, so much the better, for we shall all be in good humour—yes, on Tuesday night, Eliot, I should like to see you at the house. I have a proposition to make,—business matters of some interest to you.—Well, these horses won't stand longer.—Friday night,—and then Tuesday! Kriemhild, no slanders on my guests, now. Good-bye,—good-bye!”

We whirled off, a saucy little veto from mademoiselle bringing that rare laugh to the face of the financier. I was pleased.—“A proposition, eh? Well,” and I poked the man of money in his confounded old ribs, chuckling out my words like a stage uncle from India. “Well, Linsey, and it's dollars to doughnuts the boy has a counter proposition for you!”

“Let him make it,” said Cards; “let him make it. Kriemhild is a good girl.... Things have happened since 'fifty-five, John? Eh? Things have happened.”

He had to watch his horses down the long hill. I thought of the things which had happened, and even more of the things which had not happened. Those honest eyes, those bright



faces, which I had just seen, set my mind to better tune; I turned and waved another farewell to the pair as they stepped merrily after us through the crisp, brown leaves. Love is not dead. Against the bare trees, the clear western sky, were poetry and youth visible as warrants of his unfading prime and moving to his eternal music. — I took heartily little interest in the stock-farm.



## IV

### TRIMALCHIO'S DINNER

WHY this title, pray? Why Trimalchio, Mr. Wild, why Trimalchio? I could find you such a pompous, vulgar, and ridiculous upstart in this good city of ours, yes; but his name is not Cards. Cards is not of that breed; Cards is a man of imposing presence, as his portrait yonder in the Academy exhibition will testify; and his eyes are keen with other lights than those of mere money-getting, than those, even, which threaten and command as leader of the financial world. He is urbane, reticent, of cosmopolitan habit of thought; the full grace of letters may not be in him, but its shadow long rested on him in academic days, and he is a judicious reader still. He has written now and then, in sound English, an article of conservatively optimistic tone on problems of his world. Cards a Trimalchio? — Nonsense.

Nevertheless, this is Trimalchio's dinner. Trimalchio is here, in many a phase, as guest, and Trimalchio's own guests are here, — sycophant,



flatterer, — and cynic, did you say ? — yes, cynic. I wish I held that other cynic's pen ! And if the slave and the dancing-girl and the hired bully all fling me a negative by their absence, tell me, I beg you, how far one has to go from these respectable walls to find slave and girl and bully crouching in the shadows, sure of hire.... Trimachio's dinner it shall be.

The Reverend Doctor de Ligny has long since asked a Presbyterian blessing upon the good things which unspeakable and unsearchable Providence has showered upon us, its unworthy creatures ; and the good things of a solid sort have fairly disappeared down our appreciative throats. Chairs are now pushed back or drawn closer for congenial groups ; and the loud chatter of voices, bursts of laughter cognizant or recognizant of wit, occasional sameness of monologue, all contrast with that respectful hum which accompanied the business of eating. Wild revelry is not here ; but there are men whom no authority short of death shall keep from their drink. Judge Sandville, of our county court, who plays the best hand at poker in the state, has brewed a great bowl of punch. Far past his threescore, the judge can drink the drink of ten, unscathed, — probably not for Galahad's reason, — and he is the idol of every minor criminal, particularly



the African contingent, within the reach of his court; no decent political "pull" ever failed to find response in Judge Sandville's generous breast. His rival in carrying liquor is Judge Bigge from far up the state. With these two as props of hilarity, things are very pleasant by the punch-bowl. Yonder, to be sure, sits a man who cleaves to Apollinaris and has the air of reading his Bible in public. But he is a mere punctuation-mark. Nearly everybody is smoking. The crowd is too large for adjournment to one of the smaller rooms; but then, who would wish to leave this famous hall?

Brilliantly lighted, with its admirable scheme and decorations, it nevertheless seems just a trifle discontented at so many suits of black, such sameness of shirt-front; even the huge diamond studs, flashing sporadically under certain crimson and political countenances, fail to atone for women's variety of dress. On the other hand, this monotony of array serves to set off the differences which one can observe at close range in the human face more or less divine; one sees nothing else. With women in the affair, men's expressions fall into an uninteresting deference shaded only by the respective admixture of cynicism; but when, as here, one has simply halted the front rank of success purely male, and when Plutus asks Bacchus for his



flash-light, the photograph ought to be worth while. From Cards down to yonder political pew-opener, every face testifies to an owner who in some way has outstripped his competitors, whatever the class, the contest, the value of the prize. It is prevailingly the American face, just now full of a raw delight in its new exaltation before the world; its type is of keen eye and heavy jaw, reading always success in terms of solid cash. It is not the type of fifty years ago, as you will see if you care to pick out the best of these Trimalchians and make a group of them to match that old engraving, which one saw aforetime on so many walls, of Clay addressing his brother senators. Idealize the moderns at will, for the others are idealized; but keep the type. You will find that these modern faces, gaining in squareness and motive power, have lost that hovering and elusive but unmistakable element of the ideal which you note in Clay, and which, at its best, impresses one so powerfully in the features of a Lincoln. The lean and hungry look of a nobler desire is gone; this new face is more contented, more despicable. Money, not power of the old sort, is now the standard; and money has sent that dethroned ideal to haunt other American faces than these of the ranks of success. Not a man of the normal guests at this banquet who is in any wise



poor by choice; not a face has its mark of renunciation, of sacrifice, of devotion to any ideal in art, letters, statesmanship, religion. Men with such a mark are to be found throughout these United States, and found in plenty; but they come not within the house of Cards. Of the actual guests, I figure that about one-third are gentlemen; that is, they have "the instinct of behaviour." Another third are men whose lack of this instinct finds compensation in a rough, hearty, common-sense fairness of appeal, robust vigour of action, and in a character abnormally sensitive to certain claims of the personal conscience, abnormally callous on the side of communal ethics,—in short, that bundle of civic paradoxes which we call "American," because there is no other name for it. The final third are either successful criminals or lucky cads. And if for but one serious and active hour my first third and second third would take counsel of that vanished group of fifty years ago, would consult the discredited ideals, then this final third of mine would be divided promptly between the workhouse and the jail. As it is, they set the national pace, these thieves and procurers....

I start from my revery. Eliot is smiling at my grimaces and mutterings. I essay to point him out the great men among our guests; but



the lights burn too brightly for me, and the smoke fogs my glasses. I give it up, finding a better Cicerone at my elbow; and I introduce Eliot to Bob Pulliss, our lawyer. Some men will not have much to do with Bob Pulliss; but if you accept Sir Shark himself, why balk at the clever little pilot that dodges about at Sir Shark's command?

Our "young Napoleon" of the bar is fifty, and well past it; but he plays the rude, frank boy for all the snow that powders his thick and shaggy hair. Robert Pulliss, of the law firm of Sharp, Pulliss, and Reighcoff — Sharp, as we all know, is on the bench and Reighcoff is in councils — began his career as an eloquent orator in the college debating-society; he shook the arsenal, and fulminated over Greece, for reform in the civil service, reform in civic things, reform everywhere. He was a keen worker in the law-academy. Hardly admitted to the bar, he plunged into reform again, and "ran" for council. Here, first, he showed his practical side, giving the party leaders a vivid little scare, and winning over two professional politicians of his district. Of course they sold him out to the other candidate; and Pulliss, who had figured on all chances except absolute perjury and treason, settled down to a practice of law which had every omen of success save clients. Somehow he could make



no headway. Angrily he planned an onslaught on certain legislation, not invulnerable, made by the city in the interest of a great company; and was hot on his scheme when he received two visits. One was from an emissary of the corporation; he left Pulliss with suave farewell and an ultimatum that turned the young lawyer's face white. Presently the same face went red with anger as the two traitor politicians hove in view. But they soon showed him that they had acted under orders. They flattered Pulliss's importance, ability; regretted, in Fescennine jocosities, his postponed wedding; and finally made their bid. Pulliss was to cease from troubling, take a fat job, consecrate his talents to the regular party, and see how fast fortune would smile upon him. "A hat full of money, Pulliss; a barrel of opportunities; and nobody goes back on you inside the rails. You know that. Think it over, — this is straight from the Old Man."

Pulliss did think it over. To-day he is the greatest of all the political lawyers. You mark him slipping into a corporation's inner rooms, gliding into the forbidden chamber of a political leader who "will see positively no one," or, in his own office, whispering with the two or three new-fashioned millionaires who are to put their money behind — not into, no, no, — behind a venture which shall set the speculative public



aflame for privilege to occupy a far and crowded corner of the trap. That is legal Pulliss. Pulliss convivial, in the car, on the street, at the club, is another man. He has a loud laugh, tells a racy tale, slaps on the back and is slapped, plays a fierce game of poker, and looks, when he is not talking, haggard, cynical, and old. I have a sneaking fondness for him; and I present him to Waltham Eliot as the wickedest lawyer I know, naming the youth as an intending Hercules, and bidding Pulliss tell what he can of the stables that are now to be cleaned so thoroughly.

—“Picturesque old ruin, the Major, ain’t he?” I hear Pulliss say with scant attempt at a confidence.

“Delightful man,” says Eliot; “I’m his guest. . . . No, never mind. Tell me all about these dukes here, Mr. Pulliss! For a start, who is the pallid person yonder?”

“That? Old ‘Wash’ White. Just sent to Congress; and I’m sorry for *it*. Limit, isn’t he? When a man used to tell me he was going to Congress, I said ‘keep it dark, then; nobody would suspect you. You look decent enough for your friends to deny it.’ But this is too much. Congress, even, doesn’t deserve such punishment as ‘Wash’ White.”

“I agree with you,” said Eliot. “And the affable, easy-looking man with the moustache,



who is not paying any attention whatever to Wash's soft applications?"

"That is our great man — in the city. That's the boss. Runs the whole show. He can make any man anything, and can kick any man out of office from the Mayor ... up."

"May that ankle never swerve  
From its exquisite reserve,"

quoted Eliot, with a laugh. This was all amusing, and by no means dangerous. "Why, the man looks amiable enough."

"Never goes back on his friends, that's sure."

"Next him?"

"That's old Bluffe, — president of the Garbage Club."

"And the heavy-faced man listening yonder, with his eyes half shut, to the ruddy sport?"

"That? Don't know *him*? That's Ganewood."

"Ganewood!" Eliot stared. The cartoons made a mess of the face, then. That man Ganewood? But, after a moment, the Bostonian, now in poetical vein, quoted a couplet more true than any cartoon: —

"Feet in the jungle that leave no mark,  
Eyes that can see in the dark, in the dark....

He is grim."

"Grim, eh? Yes. — Talk books with him, and



you'll swear he's librarian of the British Museum.... But if you want to play with the political animals, — don't; if you must, though, just don't begin with him."

"I should like to ask him a dozen straight questions about Pennsylvania politics...."

"And I'll see that your corpse goes to your friends."

"Thanks. — And the ruddy sport?"

—"Oh, that's another congressman, — our aristocrat, Olcutt. Cards put him into Congress, — son of somebody who did things for Cards in the old days. This chap comes from Oxford; combination of Anglicized gentleman and American politician. I'll take you to his bachelor quarters some day. Over the fireplace he has a Latin inscription! I think it was found at Baiæ, those old sinners' Saratoga and Newport in one. I put it once into free English for the politicians: —

Dice and women and wine lay waste our bodies, and yet  
what  
Else has life worth while save dice and women and wine?

And it's blank near right, eh? Don't you grin when you see people going to church?"

"Not yet."

"Wait till you've lived here awhile, then. Only the churches will be empty. Who believes in anything?"



“Individual consciences are still alive. So is the national conscience,—if we could appeal to it.”

“The post-mortem was held sometime ago in Philadelphia, at any rate. If you have a conscience about you, my advice is to chuck it out. Pay your bills, of course, and be decent to your family, and send a cheque now and then to a soup-kitchen or a fresh-air fund. Get enthusiastic over a boulevard to the park, and subscribe liberally to the symphony concerts,—that’s all right. But don’t be queasy about the illegal registration, and the stuffed ballot-boxes, and, above all, the city contracts. If you kick there, you’re lost.... Oh, I know what I’m saying. I sat for *your* picture, Mr. Eliot, at five-and-twenty! At forty you’ll sit — no, no, not for mine, no, but, we’ll say, for Cards’s....”

“I won’t discuss Mr. Cards. But see here, you know that conscience isn’t the handicap you’d make it out. You believe in conscience!”

“You think so?” — Pulliss’s mask of bluff and slang was visibly thinner; a face came dimly into view which had once given tryst to the ideal. “You can’t carry it, Eliot,” he said, looking kindly at the Bostonian; “no. I was once as keen as you are. I tell you frankly, either make your compromise as high as you can,—higher than I did, God knows,—or else teach



Greek, Mensuration, and the Chemistry of Agriculture in a Nebraska college. Buy an abandoned farm. Study the habits of animals. Lecture on Florentine Art and the Beautiful Soul. There are several ways to earn an honest living. But don't try corporation law on a conscience — here in Philadelphia."

"Why did you back down?"

The mask was put on again tight. — "I? Oh, — I wanted to get married. Eh? And my bride to be, though charming, was *sans dot* ... *sans dot*. — Going to be a hard winter, you think? Very likely. And Cards gives one a stunning good wine, doesn't he? The judge, too, brews good punch: why don't you drink it? Or look at those small politicians...."

"I'm not interested in the minor disreputabilities. The problem is how to keep out of their way."

"Pay them to move on, as Cards does."

"No. Let's drive them out!" Eliot pounded the table, and appealed to the submerged reformer in his companion. "Think of our courts, — of our noble old common law."

Pulliss laughed. "Courts, eh, and noble old common law? — Judge!" he cried aloud, "Judge!"

"Well, Bobby?" came a voice from the vicinity of the punch-bowl. "What is it, Bobby?"



“Come here and welcome a new member of our bar!... Ah! Take my seat. Judge, I present Mr. Waltham Eliot, late of Boston, who is going to essay those *lucubrationes viginti annorum* which make a Philadelphia lawyer.”

Judge Bigge had come ponderously over to the pair. “Bobby,” he said, “go mount guard over that punch. And don’t let ’em thin it! As Daniel Webster said to the barkeep, ‘don’t *inundate* that liquor!’ Eh? — Well, sir! I am pleased to meet you. — This chair of yours strong, Bobby? We reverse the saying of scripture; Moses sits in the scribes’ and pharisees’ seat, — and Moses weighs over two hundred. Ha! *Lucubrationes viginti annorum*, eh? That’s in Blackstone; you don’t know Blackstone, Bobby. I learned it out yonder by the Ohio border, after I’d taught district school all day, sitting by a tallow-dip in a house you’d condemn for your chickens. — Friend of Cards, sir? Ha! *Lucubrationes*... No! If you start under *those* auspices, it will be *lubricationes* — and of a very few months!”

Eliot laughed — as who could help laughing? — not so much at the jest as at the twinkle in that keen old eye. Pulliss, with his own chuckling, boyish shout, went off to exchange chaff with men of punch; and Eliot was alone with the judge. Our veteran had been thirsty; his flash



of shrewdness soon faded away ; though he carried his great freightage of liquor with a stateliness and a composure beyond all precedent, he was come to the stage where, under cover of sonorous sentences, rolling eye, and a gracious, almost paternal manner, he allowed distinctly ominous confidences to leap the hedge of his teeth. Father of the bar, he said, he welcomed Waltham Eliot with great emotion, as a son, — “a son-in-law, eh ?” He repeated his little jest, grew suddenly grave, glanced at Cards, and again at Eliot. “We must not trifle,” he said solemnly ; and began a formal speech as if he were giving one of his ponderous charges, enjoying the turns of phrase and dwelling on the big words.

“Sir, I can see that you are virtuous, temperate, assiduous, of unusual capacity and promise ! I welcome you to our Pennsylvania bar. We need new blood, sir. Between you and me, there is too much corruption stalking in the very shadow of the bench ; and no one knows as I do the temptations to which an underpaid justiciary is exposed. Distrust the corporations ! Sir, the electorate has vanished ; you appeal to it in vain. The press, where not venal, is impotent. There remain, sir, but the devil in the party-leader who disposes and receives, and the deep sea in the corporation which arranges and pays ! —



“My country, ’tis of thee,  
Sweet land of liberty,  
Of *thee* I sing!”

The judge's eyes were moist, and he bent over to Eliot in patriarchal emotion. “I will give you, my young friend, a chapter from my own eventful life. Strictest confidence, eh?” Eliot nodded. The sinking of Solon in Silenus was fairly accomplished.

“Some years ago, I was the justice whose lot made him hand down the decision in a great clash of corporations and public interests. — You don't drink much punch? Well, that's right. But age must have his staff... I went deep into the law of that case, and I held it under the most anxious advisement. The corporations were excited, and had their vile emissaries buzzing about me. Sir, I took no pains to conceal from these pitiful fellows, with their basely hinted proffers of a fat cheque, that my decision would be adverse to their selfish, mercenary interests. The tenor of my forthcoming opinion was noised about the inner circles; wider it spread; and prices fell, — fell, — my stars, young man, how they did fall! Now look here, young man, you know it is no light thing to bear the responsibility of a depreciating decision. I grew restive. Here was I, a judge, a patriot, a lover of my fellow-men, piling trouble right up



in the path of a common carrier." The judge suddenly laughed. "Funny, ain't it?" Then he grew very grave again. "Sir, I fairly ached over that decision. The thing was assumed as certain, settled. And prices fell, — fell! Sir, night after night, when deep sleep falls upon men...by the turtles, I'll sleep, though, to-night!...when deep sleep falls upon men, I searched the law to see if I were not justified in a more liberal interpretation of our statutes and decisions. I called in a wary and silent friend to help me, a learned man, — the solicitor of our mightiest corporation. Night after night I had closed my books, and like the young man in the Bible — you read regularly, I trust, in the sacred volume? — I had gone away sorrowful. But now a great light came to me. I saw my little error. I prepared a new decision, turning squarely from the old, a just and upright decision, on the side of our busy highways of traffic. Walter, — I think your name is Walter, and I am very fond of you, — Walter, stand by the common carrier, and the common carrier'll stand by you! Eh?" — It was wonderful to see the judge suppress the foolish little laugh which the liquor in him set up, and put his iron will to work again for comparatively straight talk. He went on. — "You can't pick a flaw in that decision. George H. Standish tried it, —



and George H. Standish picked a peck of troubles. Peter Piper picked... Eh? Hah! Yes, sir. And when I saw how bad men were still anticipating my earlier opinion, pulling down the value of those splendid properties, I knew my duty, — and backed 'em up. Yes, sir, I knew my duty. I backed 'em up. Sir, — in your ear, — I made sacrifices that would astonish you. I sold, borrowed, pledged, — through safe parties, sir. I even mortgaged my ancestral farm in Potter County. And I read my decision.” — At this memory, and the thought of his righteousness, tears came again into the stern old judge's eyes. — “Well, how those stocks did soar! I made, sir, — in your ear, young man, — I made, Walter, I made...” He looked around, then laughed merrily. “No, by Jings, I won't tell you. Bully punch, isn't it? Bobby! — Bring me some more. — Walter, I'd like to adopt you as a son....”

Waltham Eliot rose as Pulliss came up with supplies for the judge. “Take my chair, if you will — and thank you. Judge, good evening for the present.” He bowed to both, and turned to me. I looked at him narrowly. “Youngster,” I said, “you need a change of air!” And with a parting jest from Pulliss, we walked arm in arm along the tables. I was hunting for another kind of Philadelphian; and presently I found him.



## V

UP to this point the remedy which Cards had selected for undue reforming zeal in Eliot could hardly be called an unqualified success. The young fellow's face reminded me of his uncle long years ago when some chance acquaintance would begin to tell robustly facetious stories. And I am bound to say that I myself became troubled in spirit; I was now heart and soul with Cards in his design upon the youth, not only for the cause itself, but in my own shame as one who had railed indiscriminately at our institutions and our public men. What if this fearful satiric gift of mine had ruined Eliot's chances for life and happiness by kindling his quixotic fires? I looked again at his countenance, and said: "That was no fair sample of our law. But here is business pure and undefiled in the person of our great railway expert, Mr. Ossian Malstrem, to whom I present you;" and I made him sit cosily by this illustrious person, a man still under fifty, of middle size, with closely clipped hair and beard, hard eyes, gray, clear, and an even voice.



“Cheer up this boy, Oss,” I said. “He’s been talking with Bigge. Show him the real thing, — wheels going around, and all that. No politics!” — He looked keenly at Eliot.

“You *can’t* talk politics with me, even in business.”

“Why don’t you talk business in politics, then, sir? Taxpayer, — and that City Hall!”

“Admire it?”

“An outrage!”

“Precisely. But where do *I* come in?”

“In allowing it.”

“My *dear* sir! Flattered, I’m sure! But ‘allow,’ — that’s the college point of view, I suppose? Or the Major’s? The Major has worked wonders in our political world....”

“Nonsense, Oss,” said I. “Come. Cheer the fellow up a bit; talk straight to him. I wish you would tell him what you once told me, — about granger legislation and the railways. I thought it had some sense in it.”

“Thanks,” said Malstrem, in his grave, ironical way. — “Well, Mr. Eliot, I should be glad to see you at my place over by the Delaware. I bought it of a politician, who, strange to say, went to pieces, — smashed. He called it, oddly enough, ‘The Grafts’; but that was before we had the slang in its modern political sense.”

“Proddem,” I interjected, “as they used to



call the man, was a graft himself, and the worst we have: Irish bogwood and American slippery-elm."

"Well, I bought his place, and I'll keep the name. Now, Mr. Eliot, come over there, and I'll show you my roses; they're the best in the country, and, as the Major will tell you, I inherit the taste for them from my mother. How do I raise such beauties? Well, I use plenty of manure. Simple, isn't it, — and uninteresting? We talk about the roses; in polite conversation we don't talk about the manure. Personally, I don't investigate the manure; I pay for it, and my men buy it. The roses won't grow without it. It costs a great deal. In the early spring it makes a bad smell, — isn't at all pleasant for a while; but at last we have the roses. At college you call that an allegory. — Try to raise your roses without a fertilizer, if you like; run your business without regarding politics, — if you like. Then see where you come out. Do you suppose we railroad men want to touch politics? Not we! But remember the granger days. Think how every little hayseed politician would have his bill up for a 'strike.' Now the boss calls them all down. We have to see the boss. Find me a better way, — I'll walk in it! Give us something better than our crude railway legislation, insure us against interruption, and I'll order



Ganewood himself kicked out of my outside office. — Mr. Eliot, you're young ; pardon me, sir, — but that's your trouble."

"In New England," began Eliot. . . .

"You haven't exactly model railroads, now, have you?" broke in Malstrem, with a chuckle and a furtive wink at me. He had said the last word on politics. "Why, sir, up there you *are* behind the times!"

"Our commissioners. . . ."

"Fine! Great institution! But what service, what road-beds, — and as for speed! Why, I was up there in my car last summer. . . ."

This was safe ground, and I turned away; Eliot's reluctant smile showed his appreciation of Malstrem both as master of fence and as a gentleman. I made room for myself in the circle about Cards, where were gathered sundry of the choicer spirits. Foremost was De Ligny the Presbyterian parson, robust, aggressive, something of the dandy in his dress, but prompt to defend any attack on church or faith. He is very rich, splendidly generous when he pleases and is pleased, a mighty hunter and fisherman, entertaining royally in his great palace by the Northern Sea, where he spends his summers. He is a man's man now; would it had been always thus! Alas, he began as an emotional and dramatic preacher; women fought for a word from him;



and that sermon on "Resignation," — surely, you remember what stir it made up and down the land! In a pernicious game of cards, he said, — he was preaching at the funeral of an only child, — it was well known that one's partner often called upon one for one's best card.... "Partner, your best! I play the game alone." How cheerfully you give up that card! But when, in the great Game of Life, that Partner... and so on. It made an immense sensation, — and, as a result of it, the daughter of a great pill-manufacturer gave *her* best, to wit, her heart and her millions, to De Ligny; but he dislikes any mention of it now. His style is terse, authoritative, welcome to men. He writes manly essays, cheery and optimistic poems. When he lectures for a charity, he gives for choice his easy reminiscences: "Crowned Heads and Others that I have Seen." He is a buttress of things as they are; makes no contemporary references in his sermons; is a very Hobbes for conformity and common sense. Cards decidedly approves of him as one who awes the radical; now and then De Ligny sees the banker, who usually braves his own services and rector, taking a day off to hear this robust alien. Just now, as I join the group, De Ligny is upholding dogma.

"I remember talking to Gladst'n' about this very thing. How are you, Major Heigh? — Yes.



‘Take the church out of society,’ I said, ‘and where are you?’ ‘Exactly so,’ says Gladst’n’. ‘And never mind about the church,’ I made bold to say, — ‘your English establishment or my Scotch; where’s *society*?’ ‘Precisely,’ said Gladst’n’. And there it is, Cards. I know all the arguments. Who doesn’t? — science and force, and all the rest of it. It doesn’t worry *me*. Some of the parsons go in for Higher Criticism, — a good rope, I tell them, a good rope. It will hang them all higher than Haman. ‘Higher’ indeed! We all try a little atheism, and that sort of thing, in our youth. Why, you, Signior Host, you went through it in the Harvard days, I think; — ‘personal enemy of Jehovah,’ as dear old Heine puts it, eh?”

“I was indeed.” Cards smiled at the remembrance, and pushed some choice cigars to the cleric. “Your ash has fallen, De Ligny. Take a fresh cigar, like Prince Florizel.”

“And you know your Stevenson, too, Cards! Ah, how one’s friends pass away! I can see dear Louis now, as if it were this morning, with Glazier and Painter and Blower and Feeder and all those charming fellows at the Secular Club dinner! And thanks, — I will.”

De Ligny lighted his cigar and looked about him. New arrivals were drawing up their chairs. He approved of the immediate group, with two



exceptions, — a well-known pair recently admitted, after a thrilling series of escapades just inside the marches of legal swindling, to the seats of high finance. Crowned with national and even international importance, their countenances shone in that holy boldness at which shadows of the past must flee away. But De Ligny turned his unterrified sarcasm upon them. “I should think,” he almost sneered, looking one of the Dioscuri in the face, “that you would see things at night, sir, — and hear them, too. Don’t the lambs bleat in your dreams? You have visited the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, and relieved them of...yes, relieved them.”

The twin flushed a little. The great smash in Transparent Brick was still a sensation of the day, and optimistic advice, even to friends, had been his specialty. But he kept his temper. “Why don’t they stay out of the market?” he said. “If you walk on the tracks,” — a shrug, seen and copied abroad, finished his sentence. But Cards turned back from a fresh handshake with old Dr. Leary, the chairs closed in again, and our literary set was in control. And what a set it is! Than old Dr. Leary, I think, there is no kinder gentleman and no pleasanter man of letters in all this country. And there, too, is Harden Croudley, who writes for the news-



papers, is the greatest scholar in Browning matters now alive, and is known all over Philadelphia and its environs as speaker, lecturer, reader, the wale of good fellows at a feast. He jumps about a bit nimbly in his editorial views, yes ; but then, what is there that Croudley cannot do in literary criticism and in penetration of Browning's worst? With him has come Wyeth, the professor, who would in all seriousness have filled that chair of things in general about which Carlyle made his clumsy fun. He knows everything, really ; and he writes papers for every sort of society, on every topic, with impartial sweep and plunge. He can cover any surface and dive to any depth, and he is said to be making a cyclopædia out of his own knowledge. Listen to these two men, — a random snatch of their talk as they come up....

"Ay, ay, Croudley. It must be. We must pass laws in every state against the marriage of persons tainted with tuberculosis. In Philadelphia alone, last month, and north of Market Street, three hundred and nineteen couples were married who had the fatal tendency. It must be done !"

"No, Wyeth, no."

"And why not, pray ?"

"*Keats!*" —

That is how science and literature have a



friendly tilt in our New Philadelphia. De Ligny nods pleasantly to the formidable trio, and goes on with his Stevenson reminiscence. "Dear, dear Louis!" — He seems to draw a little circle of sanctity about himself as he names the name. For De Ligny *is* just a mite conceited. The last flickering of poor old Mrs. Willy Candoe's wit was when somebody referred to De Ligny as "one of the fishing parsons." "Ah," said Mrs. Willy, in her old Boston tone, which our bright women try so vainly to imitate, "Ah, yes. I noted the *ich*-theology." — The divine now went back to his theme about church and world.

"Here is the point," he said. "A nation must have authority somewhere in its institutions, or they will fall. Only the church can offer such authority. Never mind the logic. Jowett — ah, those Balliol dinners! — Jowett signed the thirty-nine articles. Dean Swift, now,..."

"You never dined with him, did you, De Ligny?" Dr. Leary smiled his sting away, and the parson smiled in return. "No," said the latter, "jesting apart, let me advise you gentlemen one and all, if you wish to cut your coupons in peace, — stand for theology." We all looked at Dr. Leary, who says such notable things.

"Theology? Well, De Ligny, I am no enemy to it; but for me, literature is the first word and the last. Friends and books, — books and friends;



that is my device. I cannot decide your questions for you, and you are happy in your faith. We have all wept and laughed and pondered over this life of ours for long centuries; and we can say no more of it after all than to call it a patch of human loneliness lapped in ignorance, and can do no more for it than to put a little fellowship into the loneliness and to cover the ignorance with a thin veil of hope. Your dignified office, De Ligny, is to watch over the weaving of that veil. For me, as I said, the weeping, the laughing, the pondering, — literature."

"Literature can no longer make us weep or laugh," said Croudley. "We don't ask any more who is the happiest, but who is the least miserable...."

"And I say," — it is Elbert-Kelley's excited drawl cutting across from the next table, closing out the common theme, — "not every man who has wristbands on his shirt *is* a gentleman; but *no* man is a gentleman if he wears detachable cuffs."

"There is your happiest man, Croudley," said I.

"I'm not sure, though," resumed Cards, taking up De Ligny's former assertion, "that you can maintain the old theology."

Wyeth, a stout agnostic, quoted Stendhal's word that the only excuse for the creator is his non-existence, and Croudley protested that there



is no theology any longer, but just sociology. De Ligny ignored both. He was answering Cards.

“You, of all men, Cards, should not reject theology.”

“Why?”

“Because you can’t afford to fall back upon ethics.” — I chuckled over this, but De Ligny remarked that he was serious, not scurrilous. De Ligny is a pompous person, — trying to snub *me!* — “No, no, Cards,” he went on; “if you rest your case on mere morals, the ethical-culture folk will give you, first, a bad quarter-hour; then the socialists will make that quarter-hour seem bliss. No, sir; stick to theology....”

“*Ah*, Cards! Cards! Attention, please! Hi!” It was Malstrem’s sharp voice that startled us. “Rap for silence. Your young friend has a story to tell me. I guyed him about his Yankee railroads, and he gets it back with the old corporation cry and a new story. I’m not selfish. Let us *all* hear it... Mr. Eliot’s story!”

Cards showed some annoyance as a chorus of calls arose in echo of Malstrem. Speeches of the formal sort were not welcomed as a rule at these dinners, but they occurred now and then; while a good story, if decent, was always in order. He ought, however, to protect his guest.



"Let him tell it, Linsey," I whispered. "Safety-valve. He's game. Look at him." Cards nodded.

"Have you a story, Eliot?... If the gentlemen wish, and you are willing..."

"Mr. Eliot's story!" The cry was unanimous; and Malstrem slipped back into his chair with a malicious smile dodging about the bearded mouth,—a smile which only increased when Cards, bland now as May, assured the guests that if the tale had Malstrem's backing, it would be choice. "Don't spare him, Mr. Eliot. We are all at his mercy here in Philadelphia — can't get in or out unless he is willing."



## VI

THE young fellow rose. I could see that he was game all over, like most of these sharp Yankees,—lock, stock, and barrel; he would see the thing through. He poured out steadily half a glass of Apollinaris, looked about him, drank, and then began.

“It’s not much of a story,” he said in even tones, with that touch of a foreign accent that Bostonians all affect, “and I mentioned it to Mr. Malstrem simply to show that other commissioners were needed in New England besides those who regulate our railways,—to block stupidity and greed. Doubtless Pennsylvania needs no such supervision.”

“Quite right, Walter, quite right. You are in God’s country.” And the sympathetic judge once more hummed softly, *My country, ’tis of thee*. “Go on, Walter,” he said paternally.

“It happened last autumn. You know the White Mountain region, gentlemen? I love it.”

“Come to Bar Harbour, Mr. Eliot! You will be fickle in your passion for the woods when



you have seen our Cleopatra of Maine." So De Ligny, waving a graceful hand. "But pray pardon my interruption! — Nice, clean-looking, educated gentleman," he added to Cards; "an acquisition."

"Well, sir, it does ask some constancy to cleave to our lady of New Hampshire; she is all burnt and scarred, you know, with the handiwork of the new lumbermen. Still, there are some noble forests left. One place I heard about where there was considerable hardwood, and the foliage was said to surpass anything in the whole region; and thither two chums of mine and I went last fall. I recommend the scene to you, gentlemen, as a study in nature, in political economy, and in corporations."

"Seen our City Hall, and the Filter Beds?..."

"Shut up, Pulliss!" — "Order in the body of the house!" — The politicians were waking to fun. But Eliot only smiled at this man or waved an indulgent gesture to that clamorous group. He was in perfect poise.

"Well, gentlemen, imagine a valley of exquisite proportions, mainly cleared and quite arable, open to the south and running northward to a point high up on the slope of forest-covered hills that close it in. Follow the road thither, by a pretty stream; soon the farms appear. I didn't count them, but there they were, — the usual



thing: comfortable little house, woodshed, barn, orchard, and a few fields,—I should say five-and-twenty farms in sight, and others hidden from the road. Estimate roughly the population of that valley!”

Various replies were made, a few serious, but many jocose.

“Well, gentlemen, just one solitary human being lives there. All is desolate and abandoned as Pompeii.”

“Why didn’t you buy a farm or two?”—“Or take them all?”—“Or open your pores, and give it to Boston for a park,—she needs one.”—“Or raise beans?”—Humorous inquiries were still rife; but Eliot, who was now fairly master of the situation, brought them easily to a close.

“Ah! Why *didn’t* I buy a farm? Precisely, my astute, my potent, grave, and reverend signiors,—why *didn’t* I buy one, or all? There was none to buy. Enter—Mr. Malstrem!—enter our corporation. A company of indefinite resources and unquestionable legislative sanction has bought the whole tract, has its caretaker there on the slope to prevent a rival destroyer from stealing timber,—and will sell to nobody.”

“What’s wrong in that?”

“Did I say anything about wrong? I am telling a story,—primarily to Mr. Malstrem, and, by



request, to his . . . friends. No, I repeat, you can't buy a farm there if you wish it. What fifty years ago was a thriving community, and bred as fine a set of men as we can show in this land, supporting them from cradle to grave, is now a desert, owned by the corporation which, as you say, is quite within its legal rights. Of course it is backed by the railroad, — the great road which they say up there to be like Louis XIV; it is the state. And this timber company does its perfect work. Whole forests are cut off, and not a stick or bush is left; when the work is done, it decamps, leaving so much dead land for the towns to levy taxes upon . . . if they can. And now it has bought this valley. Before the last trace of those old farms is gone, gentlemen, suppose you see, with my poor eyes, a little group of buildings there which once formed the heart of the community, — church, schoolhouse, and a home or two close by. When I was there, the church still stood; it is pulled down now. Corporations have no use for a church, and like Macbeth they cannot say 'amen.' But it was there a year ago, that church; a rude building. The door was wide open. We walked up the aisle, past huddled benches; on the reading-desk lay an old Bible . . . now with other bad assets of the corporation . . . just as if the preacher had left it there



a few minutes before, when the hard-headed folk filed out with a good, old-fashioned, rocky New England sermon in their gizzards....”

“Capital description!” And De Ligny gave his placid, musical laugh.

“Then the schoolhouse, — open, too. But all tossed about inside, and upset. An old sleigh was stored there, itself falling to pieces, like bench and desk and rotting timbers. Indeed, one felt a trifle creepy in there, gentlemen. Farm life, cattle and poultry, Bibles, — save one, — parson, schoolmaster, the farmers and their wives, all gone; but what seemed particularly and emphatically gone was this troop of shock-headed, sturdy, chattering little Yankee boys and girls. It was here that I felt most keenly the exodus, the flight of the clan. We New Englanders are not gipsies; not Tartar tribes; not gangs of tramps. Gone: and gone whither? Of course, yonder in the wood were the substitutes, — ignorant, shiftless, roving aliens, with their revel on Saturday night, their drunken sleep on Sunday, and no need of schoolhouse or church; but I am Yankee born, gentlemen, and I felt deserted, alone. Whither had my people gone?

“Well, next to the schoolhouse, opposite the church, was another place; and that, by Jove, wasn’t deserted. The inhabitants hadn’t left



that home, and so far the kindly corporation has not evicted them. There was the graveyard."

It seemed as if the lights burned lower. A queer, stolid eloquence had crept into this young man's impassive and level tone of talk. He was coming to his point.

"A little graveyard on the slope by the side of the road, grassy, with large rocks here and there. Most of the graves had fallen in deplorably, and the stones were hardly to be seen at any distance from where we stood; the names, too, were hard, in many cases, to decipher. But there were exceptions, of course. Nearest to us was a row of graves with perfectly legible inscriptions, the names often repeated from stone to stone, — brothers, cousins, I suppose; and by each of these little mounds, as by some of the rest, was planted a tattered, weather-beaten Union flag...."

"Ha! Soldiers of our great civil war, and martyrs to the Union cause. You are speaking, sir, to sympathetic hearts. Go on." The judge was affected. He wagged his colossal head in the most elegiac fashion, and whispered hoarsely to Pulliss that he was "very fond of Walter, — very fond."

"Yes. Soldiers. It seemed to me that nearly every able-bodied man in that valley must have



gone to the war, and that half of these men were killed. Happy fellows who were brought home and buried here! The stream is hidden in a little hollow, well beyond the graveyard; but you can hear it murmuring along in the silence.... I am sentimental, you see. I asked my friends to walk on a bit while I lingered over those graves. I could not leave it all, — the little flags, and the hum of the brook, and the stillness.... I had an uncle in the civil war, my namesake, who — who died, as you know, Mr. Cards.”

Cards nodded.

“And I leaned on a rude bit of fence, and stared at those names and at the little flags. It was a good while, I fancy. I recurred to a bad habit I once had of reciting verses aloud. I wasn’t well brought up, you see. Those graves made me think of Harry Hotspur’s words just before his last fight; I apologize for quoting them in this presence:—

*“O gentlemen, the time of life is short.  
To spend that shortness basely were too long,  
If life did ride upon a dial’s point,  
Still ending with the arrival of an hour.”*

But suddenly I came to a stop, and it may be I jumped a little; for a man had come up behind me, unnoticed, and was also looking at the graves very solemnly indeed; I suppose



he thought I was saying prayers over my relatives. He was the kind of elderly man with a large, bright, plaid necktie whom you see in our smoking-cars and who asks you to make up a party at cards, — or will tell you a merry tale. But he was very solemn now, and asked me if I were a ‘Catholic’; he threatened to start an illuminative theological conversation. I wish he had chosen some other time to chew tobacco so aggressively. He was not the lone caretaker, it seemed, but a far more important personage, — a higher official of the corporation itself come here to look over the ground. He grew very affable. He spelled out the names and asked if they were any of my ‘folks.’ I pointed to the flags. Like you, Judge, he arrived rapidly at the conclusion that here were soldiers killed in the war of the rebellion, — or perhaps he had known of it before.

“Oh, he was *very* affable. He told me with glee how, over at the sawmill, he had ‘steered’ a legislative committee so that they saw nothing they were meant to see and would give the company a clean bill. Then he talked of the graves at our feet. ‘Curious,’ he said, ‘the war made tariff, and our business, and prosperity; and these poor devils here made the war! Went to town meetin’, yelled for the old flag, and marched off in great shape, — endin’ up *here*.



S'pose they'd not gone to war; — be here now, I s'pose, raisin' crops and kids, lumberin' a little in their fool way, goin' to quiltin' and huskin' and hearin' jays lecture in the schoolhouse or church. That's what, if we hadn't had the war, eh? No tariff, no prosperity; that's all right. But so far as these chaps go — jolly, if this unwa'n't born same year as I was! — ef you jest come right down to it,' and my gentleman looked at me with shrewd, confidential eyes, 'man to man and barrin' the prosperity business, you and I see these fellows were fools, — dog-gone fools. What did they get out of it? Yes, sir, that's what they were, — plain dam fools.' And he spat handily among the graves.

“And that is my story. It has a miserable anti-climax. It is only a trifling little attempt to repay Mr. Malstrem for an interesting tale he told me about roses and manure. This is about timber and dead men. And it has been unconscionably long.”

The seconds of silence that followed were soon broken by scattered remarks from neighbour to neighbour. De Ligny was enthusiastic. “I wonder,” growled a politician to Pulliss, “if our kid-glove man with the London accent could stand up two minutes at the Garbage Club?” — “An hour,” answered Pulliss, with conviction;



"any time, — and every time. Can't you see? He's keyed right up." — Cards spoke.

"A good story, Eliot. Thank you. For one, I candidly admit our atrocious folly in this matter of timber and the forests."

"Throws back," said Wyeth, sententiously. "Atavism. Our pioneer blood — bound to cut down. Learn to plant!" — He proceeded to give accurate statistics of forestry throughout the world.

"The boy is a poet," patronized De Ligny. "And a moralist, — eh, Leary? The brook, you know, and the valley; but the graves, too."

"For me," said the doctor, "the story was spoiled by that satiric touch. He should have made the brook chant its soothing dirge, its requiem, and should have left out the superfluous official." — De Ligny shook his head and turned to speak in a low voice with Cards. Wyeth answered Dr. Leary.

"But the official is signal of another kind of fight, and the modern young men must again enlist. I see his point."

"Well! So do I. But he spoiled the poetry."

De Ligny and Cards ceased to talk aside; and the banker said something to Wyeth about German theories of forestry. I crossed over to the table where Eliot sat, and was half petrified, in



my progress, to hear Ganewood's heavy voice addressing my young charge amid sudden silence.

"If you are going into public life, — I hope you will go, — avoid sarcasm. It's a bad asset. It never convinced a jury or won an election. Keep it for dinners and for us politicians under other men's roofs...."

"I think I was within the bounds of..."

"Certainly! I am not annoyed. I have had worse things than that said to me." He smiled grimly. "I am even interested. But I think you understand me. Take my advice and don't praise dead men at the expense of the living. Our time is the best time."

"Suppose I don't believe that? Suppose I drop sarcasm and say plainly that I think the destruction of timber is nothing to the destruction of our free electorate, and that real patriotism is disappearing faster than the forests?"

"Prove your facts;" and Ganewood made his rare gesture of emphasis, striking one hand with the other. "There are more patriots in this country to-day, and of better quality, than there were in 1861. You could raise a bigger army."

"For as ideal a cause?"

"For any cause."

"I doubt it."

"I know it."

The thing clicked like a telegraph instrument.



Eliot was not to be put down. "How," he said, "about intelligent, independent votes as the foundation of democracy, and how about corporation interference and false ballots?"

"Well, *what* about them? Do you *know*?"

"Something."

— "Mr. Ganewood! Mr. Cards!" A voice came into the dialogue like the horn of Scandinavian doom. It was old Upps.... "Perhaps I may speak just a word to the young man?"

Well, Cards was in for it now. He had wanted Eliot to have a plunge; but he foresaw no waters like these. Upps is my special aversion, the politicians' darling; and yet it was only fair that somebody should speak for the "boys." I dropped into a chair as the speaker began his harangue.

The Reverend J. Wesley Upps is an incidental preacher, a steady theological professor at Rocks College, in Freshwater, — Dr. Parvin Coney is its popular president, — and a regular orator, I think they call it "spellbinder," at election time. State politics and politicians have been very grateful to him; Possome and Chickie are his brokers in Philadelphia. His prophecies in regard to the legislative outlook are highly valued; and it is well to see him about your appropriation for the hospital. He is understood to be "very well off" indeed; has a sense of humour; and



can tell a lusty anecdote. In his intimate circle of friends he is inexhaustible about a trip abroad made with a few choice spirits last year; they were headed for the Holy Land, but suffered vexatious and mysterious delays in Paris, coming home again without their sprays of palm. Prosperous as Upps is, he still wears the long black coat, the full black trousers, the low-cut black waistcoat, the not too recent linen, the wisp of a white necktie, — just as he still teaches his unterrified theology and prays at prayer-meetings his fog-horn prayer. His chinbeard is black, wiry; cheeks and upper lip are smooth. In the home district he still addresses all women as “sister”; and he commands a wide range of human sympathy in that he has a daughter called Mame. I met that young person once in a railway train, was fairly forced into a seat beside her by the unctuous Upps, and heard her discourse five miles.... If I had a daughter, her name would be Harriet; and she should dress like the English girls in the frontispiece of an old “annual”; and she would carry a faint, faint perfume like lavender; and she would have a slender neck, and be shy; and her voice — seldom heard — would be low and soft. She would *not* call me “pappa” in public and “pap” in private.... Upps is a friend of Ganewood, and he is absolutely no fool. But how in the



deuce comes he to be at this dinner? — Well, my boy is in for the whole affair; he might as well hear the politicians' side from Upps as from any one. In fact, as I listen, I am not so sure that Upps cannot put things fairly straight and certainly very hard.... Hark! —

“If our young friend,” — and the penetrating nasal voice, the atrocious *r*, the correct but woefully illiterate language, cannot disguise a certain gift of oratory, a certain assurance of attention from everybody in the room, — “If our young friend feels solicitous about the future of this country, let him fix his eye on two sources of trouble: the man who sneers at *Amurric'n Institooshuns* and the man who tampers with Revealed Religion! I shan't talk politics. I shan't talk religion. But I will give our young friend a text to think about, and I will take one for myself. Even my friend Wyeth will perhaps allow me — and privately said, gentlemen, J. Bunker Wyeth, in spite of his agnostic playfulness, is at heart as good a Christian as I am...”

“Hear, hear!” and a guffaw came from Pul-liss....

...“Will allow me to quote scripture. This is what I quote for the benefit of the preceding speaker: *the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge*. Gentlemen, something sour has been eaten up yonder



in Massachusetts; I knew it the moment our young friend intimated that this country is going to perdition. When you hear a man talk corruption and preach reform, it's always safe to ask him how he got on the wrong side of the market!"

Everybody laughed, Eliot included; and somebody bellowed out "Transparent Brick!" sending all eyes to the Dioscuri, who had just seen the collapse of their wonderful trust—at safe distance. They went a bit red, but laughed with the rest. They could afford to laugh.

"But I have my own text, too," Upps went on. "I have this,—also a contrast of old and new. *The bricks*,"—another laugh arose at this unintended reference to the Twins,—"*The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.* That is *my* forestry, Mr. Eliot, and I invite you to try it. Just move, sir, into America and the twentieth century! I say to you, with our great American poetess, Ella Wheeler Wilcox,—

"Come live with me and be my love!"

At this "more tenderer" phrase, and at the unctuous solicitation on Brother Upps's classic visage, there was a fresh roar of laughter.

"Well, my young friend is sour about the



corporations. Do you know that the corporations have made this great state what she is, that they support more widows and orphans by dividends, more labouring men by actual wages, than any combination of capital and industry which the world has ever seen? You want to block them, stop them; you call them immoral. What I call immoral is to see a man throw a whole trainload of prosperity into the ditch by piling up obstructions on the tracks of enterprise and progress! That beats buying up a few abandoned Yankee farms!

“Corporations are an American institution; if you want to do away with them, you simply announce that you’ve set up business in the eighteenth century, ride in a stagecoach, and read by a tallow-dip. Who gave us steam, trolleys, electric lights, telephones? — Corporations, — and politics. Come, let’s get down to bed-rock. You asked where the little chaps had gone from that schoolhouse. I’ll tell you. Into the live corporations. Look for ’em down in Boston, out in Indianapolis — you’ll discover ’em; they’re not in the graveyard. Now we don’t find fault with you, sir; it’s just the good-old-times cry, and young men like to raise it. When you get married, and I hope it will be soon, you’re sure to tell your wife that her biscuit can’t touch the kind that mother made....”



A little movement on the part of Cards was of more import to the orator than all the uproarious approval of his claue of politicians. He went rapidly back to his argument.

“Look at the real question. What is business? What is politics? Business, ever since Cain and Abel, is getting ahead of the other fellow. Once it was just man to man; then in fairs, markets, cities. At last one man couldn't handle his trade, and he got others to help him; somebody has to regulate all this; and if corporations run business now, and if legislatures have to manage and control the corporation, I ask why not; and I ask you right here, too, what government is meant for,—is it to mark time? I guess not. I guess not.—Morality, again, the degeneration in business morals; I'll take *that* up. It is better than ever in the history of the world, and best right here in America. My young friend is saying ‘Oho,’—or words to that effect. Well, let him take the Chicago wheat pit; yes, gentlemen, the Chicago wheat pit. In old times, they praised a man as being one of a thousand when they called his word as good as his bond. In the Chicago wheat pit, every man's word, yes, his mere nod, is as good as his bond! And I'm told that out of a million transactions by word or nod hardly one case occurs where a man pleads the baby-act and shifts his contract!



And the Chicago wheat pit is not a Sunday-school, — no, sir! Think about that a bit.

“No. Let our young friend from the Bay State investigate a few facts instead of quoting William Shakespeare, and other authorities three or four centuries old, over a row of gravestones. Let him put his undoubted abilities into practical use; let him muster — he can — the brains to run a corporation and the nerve to go into practical politics. *Then* he can sign himself a twentieth-century American of America, — not an unidentified and unclaimed little political Lord Fauntleroy in velveteen panties and a male picture-hat!”

Again, laughter; and Eliot in it. He looked without resentment at Upps, thinking perhaps, just as I thought, that the worst and most frequent blunder we reformers perpetrate is to make out the politician of our day as an unredeemed blackguard. This vulgar camp-meeting roarer has his humorous, common-sense parts, which come near to redeem the rest, and give him the national, exclusively occidental touch of a general brotherhood. Cards caught Eliot's eye, and sent him one of his rare smiles. The guest replied in kind. Upps should have stopped with humour, the leveller; he went back to logic, parent of all dissent, and to sarcasm and to personalities.



“Gentlemen, I’m tired of these sneerers and reformers who make a punching-bag of the politician, just to improve their miserable wind. Where is the surest word, the unbroken promise, but in the politicians’ campaign or in the syndicate’s blind pool?”—The Dioscuri studied Cards’s scheme of decoration on the ceiling, — “Where is a nobler, sounder-hearted body of men than our politicians themselves, from Maine to Florida and from Sandy Hook clean over to the Golden Gate? And who are these reformers? Failures in business, loafers; men who are too good for America, and get their cuffs and collars made in London; atheists, and socialists, and single-tax idiots, and free-love men, knaves when they are smart and fools when they mean well! Did you ever see a politician who didn’t listen to common sense and at least support churches if he didn’t go to them? No. No. I tell you, as I said at first, what we need is more religion in the heart and more common sense in the head. Instead of that, these reformers get sentimental over business, where the head belongs, and are cold and calculating—rational, they call it—over religion where the heart belongs. My ideal American is all heart at home: wife; babies; magazines; cheque for a friend; religion,—well, what you will, but plenty of it, and stiff, honest stuff. At the office he’s all head, hard as nails,



full of fight, downs the other fellow every time. The country's full of these Americans, and they are making us the biggest thing on earth. Who wants to whine and whimper about our degenerate America while that sort of man bumps you twenty times on every city block? Yes, gentlemen, that's my American; that's my winner; and while I don't drink, I'll give you his health. And I'm not a man of malice, either. I'll make it the health of my young friend there. Let him call himself down from that critical perch of his, let him join the corporations and get into politics. Yes, my young friend, get into politics of the right sort, and I'll be glad to eat a dinner in your house, ten years hence, when you are President of the great Continental and Pacific Traffic Company with through connections to London by way of our Chinese Provinces! That's all coming! Get into the push! Don't slash with your little Yankee jack-knife at Old Glory! Get hold of the rope and hoist the flag of our Union over the whole show! That is my advice; that is the tip; that's my address, — and I am always at home. That's J. Wesley Upps ... and I thank you, gentlemen, for your kind attention. Mr. Cards, sir, I thank you."



## VII

HE stopped suddenly, like a tropical storm, shedding his holy enthusiasm as if it were a cloak: "Lie there, lord-chancellor." He looked keenly about him as he sat down, not sure that for his audience at the head of the table he had not shrieked a note or more too high, using arguments mainly fitted for the stolid Dutch farmers whose cows and cabbage patches he was wont to represent as safe only under the holy banner of the tariff as borne aloft by the peerless leader Ganewood. He smiled over to that gentleman's place, but in vain. Ganewood had moved in his mysterious way first to Cards, for whisper and nod, then to Eliot himself. To the young man, as thunders of applause rose from politicians near Upps, the wily leader addressed a few pleasant words. "It's all right," he said in his oracular style. "I'm older than you are; and you'll find that in main points great majorities are right. Don't be sarcastic. Those men"—he pointed in the direction of Cards—"back me up, and they are neither hypocrites nor rascals. Don't



believe the newspapers. As for Upps, never mind his manner, but think over his argument; be fair, — be fair. You are a good speaker, and I'd like to have you in with us; come and see me one of these days. — I'm off. Good night." And Ganewood was gone.

Trimalchio's dinner was fairly at an end; and it actually concluded, in accordance with precedent, by a toast to the health of the host, vigorously proposed by Harden Croudley, whose speeches are always in demand, and read, however extemporaneous, like a book. "What," he queried in his heavy voice, "what was the ideal gentleman of chivalry a thousand years ago? A man who fought right, prayed right, loved right. Well, that is still the ideal gentleman to-day. But he leads no crusade, he heads no host of Christian warriors to rescue the holy tomb from infidels; he leads industry, capital, enterprise in the crusade for prosperity and national success. He prays ignorantly to no random saints; but he stands for sacred as for civic ideals against the assaults of nihilism, scepticism, and anarchy. He wears the glove of no frail, laughing dame; but he upholds the beauty and sanctity of womanhood in her God-given sphere of home. My fellow-guests! Three centuries hence, history will record the American capitalist, the man who promoted vast enterprises, combined scattered in-



dustries, created new conditions of business, as typical and ideal gentleman of his day. That type is now making, — and is made. It is impersonated before your eyes "...at his gesture, the whole assembly rose like an exhalation, the judge exhaling with some difficulty... "in your host, whether you take him in this gracious act of hospitality, or as founder and ruler of that great House to which the eyes of finance turn, as the eyes of servants turn to their masters, from every quarter of the world. Fill, my friends. We drink to the Twentieth-century Gentleman. We drink to the House of Cards!..."

Uproar, applause, the banker's brief word of thanks: and all was done. The guests departed each after his kind, — Pulliss thrusting a brace of fat cigars into his pocket and holding a third in his mouth to light in the outer hall. De Ligny paid elaborate compliment to Eliot, grasping his hand, and apologizing for that "yokel of a parson. Ganewood is another proposition; I don't like him, but perhaps he is necessary. — Come and see me! I have some books, and I can give you a fair cigar! — Good-bye, my dear Eliot...."

I couldn't make out the boy's expression. I had feared a row, an outburst; but the feast had come to its decorous end. Malstrem stood near us, his cold, prominent eyes glancing about the room; he wanted to besom the mob off into



space and have a quarter-hour with Cards about some bonds, a syndicate, a coalition. Suddenly he came up to Eliot, and held out his hand.

“You’re a sportsman, sir, and you ride straight. —Has Cards converted you by this dinner? Have you now got your perspective? See Upps over there —I admit that the animal has my pass in his pocket —with the sanctimonious person, do you? Well, they are making a dicker about the hospital appropriation. Upps will steer it. It will be thirty thousand dollars, —and the hospital will get just half. And Pulliss, yonder, —with those men? Frankly put, they belong in jail. They are a little anxious about some of the papers which Pulliss drew up; but Pulliss is capable; they won’t have to pay; he won’t go to jail; and the stockholders won’t even get into court. Eh? And you talk of ‘corporations’; those aren’t corporations, they’re conspiracies. You needn’t touch them, —you couldn’t. Cards wouldn’t touch ’em. And are you going to throw those beggars into one mess with Cards and me? Did *our* sort of corporation ever fail to protect its stockholders?”

“Do you undertake personally, socially, in business, by civic action, to punish those men?”

“How do it?”

“Why do you break bread with them? Sit on boards with them? Lend them money? And



more. 'Have you not beadles in your town, and things called whips' — or at least the equivalent? "

Malstrem frowned. "No," he said slowly, and after a good pause, "No. Not for them. — I protect my stockholders."

"By . . . another kind of conspiracy? "

Malstrem shook his head. "Ride on," — he smiled as he returned to his figure, — "and ride straight; but don't ride into a swamp, — or over a precipice. For whose benefit? Not for yours, at least; and the Quintus Curtius act doesn't go nowadays. Sometime, perhaps, things will brighten up. Don't play Don Quixote, anyway. We are all glad to see you in these parts, Mr. Eliot, — and good night."

Neither before nor since did Malstrem ever take such interest in a human being as to give him even this roundabout advice. It showed what Eliot had done for himself, whatever the dinner and the guests and the speeches had done for the purposes of Cards in their impression upon the boy. Cards looked carefully at him. "Don't try to sum it up, Eliot," he said; "it's too miscellaneous. — Tuesday night, then? — Good. And good-bye, John. Good-bye to both of you, and thank you for holding up my hands! — Now, Malstrem."

Eliot went off. "I think he'll understand,



Linsey," I said in a whisper, including Malstrem in the confidence. The railroad man shook his head. "I've been studying him. Close thing, — and wish you success: but *my* bet is the other way."



## VIII

My horses took us home, as horses of mine always do, in sharpest trot; within a few minutes Eliot and I, wide-awake as a pair of hawks, were seated by a big wood-fire in my library, ready to talk it all over with a supplementary smoke. I know a hoary old sinner who says the best smoke is before breakfast. He is a degenerate, a pervert. The best smoke is the pipe after a smoke.

"I don't feel like bed," said Eliot.

"Nor I. What mischief can we invent to keep us going till dawn?" It was my jocose way; but the young fellow took me up.

"Major," he said, "I am awfully keen to know this. You're sixty years and better; I am five and twenty, — you're wise, and I'm largely fool. But tell me straight. Shall I take Malstrem's advice? Shall I believe Ganewood about yesterday and to-day? Were those men of the old war, as far as their times would permit, the same breed as we have now? You knew them all.... I'm thinking, you know, of my uncle...."



"Since you've been here with me, boy, I have thought of little else. What I know of your uncle!—Why, can it be possible that he is not a vivid, actual memory...but of course not! Poor fool that I am! And your father hardly remembered him either.... Here you have come to Pennsylvania and to me, to learn about your own Massachusetts namesake! By Jove, you shall know all I know."

"And Cards, too...and Mrs. Cards. Why, Major, you jumped!"

"Did I?—Well, well!—See here, boy, the night is young, or at least, the morning is; and I'll start my story on the spot. Are you awake enough to listen?"

"Ho!"

"Well...." I shifted uneasily in my chair, then rose and walked over to my old-fashioned secretary, where a certain drawer seemed to open of its own accord; I took out a bundle of foolscap and turned sternly upon Eliot.

"Well, Major!"

"Do you mind," I faltered, "if I *read* a little?"

"What? Not another historical novel, I hope! Oh, Major Heigh!"

"No, sir," I said firmly, "it's no novel. It is history. It is just my 'Recollections,'—you know."



“Major, Major!”

“I have given it,” I went on deliberately, “a slight literary flavour, and perhaps added a bit of sentiment here and there. Why not? Think of trash like...”

“Well, by Jove!”

“I don’t know what you mean by that. Haven’t I rights?”

“Undoubtedly. Any poetry?”

“Certainly not!”

“Well, Major, if you will let me have a bit more of that tobacco, and if I may put this log on the fire... So! Now, then, sir, I shall be your first admirer in the long list.”

“You don’t think I’d publish it? — Well, as you say, there *is* worse trash in print, — or as you *will* say, I hope. You see, it’s like this. I lived in times which are very fast disappearing into a haze highly suitable for romance but more and more unfavourable to history. I want to tell about persons whom history itself can never reach, but who made the very stuff which history tries so hard to preserve; they were in every way worth while, those persons. The problem is how I can tell of them. It is all true, this main narrative; you will detect one or two pages where incidental fiction had to come in, — for it was not in my power to be everywhere, you know....”



“Certainly not.”

“Shall I, then? . . .”

“Major, I am yours until the sleep of death!”

— So I read it to him — my manuscript.



II

IDYLL OF THE FOUNDING







## I

My name is John Heigh, at your good pleasure ; and this land which you see is mine, bought from the red Indians by my ancestor who came over with William the peaceful Conqueror : six hundred acres in my father's day, and sixteen hundred a century ago.... Six hundred now, did you ask ? No, my young friend. I have had relatives, — and have them.

About the middle fifties, when my poor recollections begin, there was a kind of splendour over the house of Heigh not to be explained by all these acres, and the harvests thereof, however bountiful. In the city, not very far from the Delaware front, a dingy sign marked an equally dingy doorway ; within, however, my mother's people had ruled almost time out of mind over swift ships and the trade with China ; and thence came that luxury which my ancestral acres never could have yielded, — the greenhouses, the gardens, all the bewildering array of rare plants and trees whose names we pronounced in such adventurous fashion, the stables, the great stone mansion, and even our library itself, fairly stocked



for the meridian of Philadelphia, and — believe me — actually put to use: in a word, the vast comfort of our life in those days before the war. Fifty years ago, the times of my idyll; and they belong for modern youth almost with cocked hats and knee-breeches. Did you ever see any man, off the stage, take snuff and pass about his box and smile upon his neighbour in a kind of community of titillation? Never, you say; and I have seen the deed, now merely histrionic, done as a daily and unconsidered act. They make snuff even yet, I am told, and sell it, — in heaven's name, to whom? I think it must be exported as ghostly freight to the Fortunate Isles, whither I too shall soon take ship; where I shall meet once more the deliberate and contemplative breed who knew how urbanity itself went out of date when folk ceased to interpose the pinch, the smile, the harmless shock, between a query and its courteous retort; and where, best of all, I shall see the heroes whom I knew. One of these heroes I am to describe for you; and at first, I fear, you will not think him a hero.

Yes, it was a cabined and formal but happy life. Children held their tongues while elders talked; and conversation ran full measure, — not this latter-day hint and laugh and innuendo. Poetry, I remember, was quoted freely; and a morsel of the *Night Thoughts* or *The Task*, the



more familiar the better, never came amiss. Even jocosities ran to sentiment and quotation. I can still see our doctor, an otiose individual, rallying my gaunt and solemn cousin of three-and-twenty about his loves. — “And how is the fair widow?” — A deprecating gesture, but not without sign of intense enjoyment; then a slow wagging of the head. And the doctor: “No, no? — Ah! Fickle youth! Well, *shadows we are and shadows we pursue*.” — All that was in the day’s work fifty years ago. — During an afternoon call, cake and “sangaree” were passed about: a beverage which my Uncle Charles, who had seen foreign parts and took unkindly to such potations, informed me was named from a corruption of the French expletive *ventre-saint-gris*. — We were pious. Clergymen had a bolder, easier way of bustling about, and took far more authority than they take now over our minor morals. The country was governed by representatives of the people duly elected at the polls, — not at a conference of the capitalist and the boss. We hammered our leather for shoes; we seasoned our timber for houses; and the men and reputations that we made were built to outlast doomsday. We had no foot-ball, but we had manly games enow, and we shouted at them in a good Christian way, — not with this college “yell” which seems to be crossed of a



war-whoop and the doxology. Indeed, indeed, sweet friends, where are the sports of our youth? Marbles are gone; tops are in a silent but sure decline; kites, — ah me, no more, no more! And we were a sturdy folk. I suppose there were weaklings enough fifty years ago; but trust companies had not been formed to immortalize this noisome breed of the swell club. Villains, too, there were, I make no doubt, anthropophagi whose heads did grow between their shoulders, and so thrust out the heart bodily and sent the soul into ignoble neighbourhood; I remember none of them, however, except the Irish boys who used to throw stones at me as I went to school. Adventure, wonder, thrills of discovery, and yearning to follow a setting sun, — plenty of all this; for the great West was close to us, and our maps had land upon them set down as untrodden and unknown. Trappers still came along now and then, and, oftener, men from half-wild Ohio with horses to sell us; my grandmother told me of Indians she had seen at our very doors, of women pointed out to her in her youth who had held house and shielded children against bad redskins, and — it was then that the wood-fire blazed best just before our old-fashioned hour for supper — of captivity and torture in the wigwams, cold, hunger, noble deaths: I touched the old breed of



our land, touching her soft but withered fingers, as her lips moved with remembered accents of the iron age.... We had few millionaires, — a scattered, lonely sort; no leisure class save in nucleus as retired merchants who despised the idler; and nearly every young man went to work.

Who were we here? — My father, an easy, emancipated Quaker, keeping no “testimonies,” but a firm believer in the philosophy of his religion; he had, too, the quiet manner, the pride of an old house; travelled he was and well read, a prop of philanthropy, a fine chairman: he looked his man steadily in the face and his word passed for fine gold. My mother, — but I think I will not write about her; though I can tell of her roses, the roses that found their way to so many sick folk. And it was only among her rose-bushes that she was ever known to sing; and my father, coming along the garden walk between the high box-borders, would stop and listen, and stoop his head. Tommy Moore forgotten and no good at all, do you tell me, Gigadibs? Very well; very well; I hear you: don’t roar at me so. Thank you, no, Gigadibs, I’ll not subscribe to your “Good Music Society.” A young woman of these parts was craftier than you, Gigadibs. the other day at her house when I was waiting for her mother to come down.... She went to the piano, and tinkled softly, and then sang



Tommy Moore's *Bendemeer*, which I had supposed, with you, to be as dead as good manners. I shut my eyes; and I heard that soft, small voice out in our old garden again....

*And I thought, are the nightingales singing there yet,  
Are the roses still bright by the calm Bendemeer?*

Only they were wood-robins. And then my Uncle Charles, half-brother to my father, and senior by ten years; no Quaker he, but a retired officer of the regular army. He had put a bullet, or what novelists call a bit of cold steel, into somebody over in Paris, or Brussels, because of a sneer at Quakers and cowards; the thing was kept marvellously quiet in the family, but was clearly not a matter of unmixed shame. Paralyzed slightly now, and pushed about in a wheelchair by his old servant, he was of course my hero, my boast, my exemplar; but were he alive a few years ago and had asked for a commission in the Spanish War, even in the best of his health and years, he would never have had a chance. He was too simple, too kindly, too much of a soldier.... There was something keen and American about him, to be sure, so that I could not use him to fill Uncle Toby's literary outline for me in flesh and blood; but he would have hewed to the line with Captain Shandy himself for honesty and kindness of heart. Sound and



seasoned men of war inclined that way ; they loved shy little maids and straightforward, bungling boys — if ever boy habitually bungled things, I did — and all grown-up folk who are beset by trouble, and yet keep a cheery fortitude under stress of unkind fate. My father was an ardent man of peace, and made me peruse that unconvincing product of Quaker genius, the *Essays of Jonathan Dymond* ; yet it was wonderful how the brothers could discuss all manner of problems as ticklish as you please, in perfect amity, — they two, and Judge Havens, our neighbour, who fairly worshipped the memory of Bonaparte and had gathered a whole library on the Corsican alone. Ah, the judge ! Could I see him for only one brief month upon the bench to-day !... His speeches were full of Burke and Cicero and old-school erudition. I still read with delight his address to the graduating class at Princeton ; what periods, what felicitous and classic phrase ! His law was sound ; his antiquarian tastes were as keen as his learning, as catholic as his interests in things of the day. But that style ! Whether he wrote to the journals, or made his paper about the old Penn milestones, it was always on high levels and in the manner of *The Letter to a Noble Lord*. Now not a word is remembered of his orations, his letters, his papers ; his law is out of date, —



oh, but out of date! — and his *History of our own County* is gathering dust on all the few shelves, save one, where it may still chance to lie. — It speaks very nobly of the Heighs. — Once the judge found a corporation remotely involved in a case that came before him; and incontinently he gave all the stock of it that he owned, — fat, dividend-paying stock it was, and the judge was not wealthy, — to a Blind Asylum. Somebody mentioned this eccentric deed the other day in City Council; and there was laughter for full five minutes. One of these dull winters I shall compile from similar eccentricities which I remember, a Jest-Book for Legislators and Judges.

Wake up, Eliot, — I am coming to the young woman! — But Eliot protests he was listening keenly.

“Ik Marvel’s *Reveries of a Bachelor* used to be a favourite book, I think, Major?” he asks silyly.

I growl a bit, and go on.

There was Miss Patty, another neighbour, of very blue blood and an income in related tints; but she carried her economies like a crown. She never spake a harsh word to mortal soul; and she never let man or woman whom she held to be out of her order cross by so much as an inch that sacred line. And Miss Patty had a sister, who was just that: Miss Patty’s sister; but at



certain revolutions of our suburban year, there came to visit these, her great-aunts, one who was very much more than just their great-niece, a young person — *Eliot*! — of sixteen summers, — and she had taken full toll of sweet and charm and fragrance from them all, — to whom I devoted the ardours of an almost hopeless love. She bore the startling name of Kriemhild.... Kriemhild, — romantic as it sounds, it is of German origin, I believe, and is hereditary in her family, — and the reassuring surname of West. I had never told my passion to her explicitly; but I begged her to read me the marriage service as it stood in her prayer-book, and then, carefully repeating the simple Quaker form, I asked, with a tremulous assumption of interest purely academic, which she preferred. There was no “obey” in the latter, I pointed out. “Of course not,” she said with great spirit; and I learned for the first time what powers of repartee lurk in our Philadelphia woman of society. We argued the point at some length, finally agreeing that it is best to be married as Quakers and to be buried as Episcopalians. Could I not promise her, by the way, to join the church? — I hung in the wind; and then she gave me her own prayer-book, putting my name below hers. I wrote “to” between, added the date with an excoriating, underlining stroke; took one wild gaze at her face, all saint



in its heavenly tenderness for my soul; thanked her in an agony of gratitude; and went home to make my last will and testament.... She had given me a late violet; I shut it in the book at the Service for the Dead. Would it be better for her or for me to attend the other's funeral? — I have never been so happy in my life. My felicity endured for one short summer month of my most immemorial year; and that month brought surprise to my comrades by reason of a strange austerity in my morals, my indifference to firearms on our Glorious Fourth, and my disdain of rural beauty at the Sunday-school picnics. Indeed, my appreciation of poetry dates from this passionate month; and I recollect that I ventured to excerpt and slightly to change a stanza of Burns, copying it on my best paper with a gilt edge and sending it to her unsigned:—

Talk not to me of Savages  
From Afric's burning sun,  
No savage e'er could rend my heart  
As, KRIEMHILD, thou hast done!

What would a new summer bring me? Men have plighted their manly troth at scant eighteen.... But before that new summer came, felicity fled from my heart. Between her and me there fell the shadow of another boy; a boy from Boston....



— I observe you are listening now, sir. Good. And watch the lights. They ought to burn low, for a ghost is entering. Do you happen to know, Eliot, how the first joke came to be made? I can tell you. Some old anthropoid snapped his eyes to keep back the tears, and the bystanders laughed; they all thought he was winking. And you notice how humorous I have made my style, and cynical, and smart? Eh? Well, I go on.

Boston and Philadelphia, in those days before the war, seemed as mutually remote as Rome and Pontus. He came to us with the mystery of your modern continental nobleman, this boy; and he brought to me a depression, a presentiment that my game was spoiled, descending like a careless conqueror amid our peaceful fields. Miss Patty, you see, had a distant kinsman of New England birth, one Dighton Perry, a godless but genial Unitarian who settled in these parts after a successful career as cotton-broker; the boy was his sister's son. Youthful, foreign, the visitor still seemed at ease in any Zion. He wore clothes of a fine, liberal cut; he had an audacity of look and gesture which to this day I cannot help associating with Boston Common and the east wind, although I have noted it in Eton boys strolling about Windsor.... He laughed now and then just like a music-box; and when impressed with anything, went *Huh!*



with a long and thoughtful outlet of breath. When he said "why," — and boys, even Boston boys, used that word constantly, — it was aspirated sharply, clear, crisp, sounding like the stroke of an axe heard on a frosty morning from the hillside; my own "why," innocent of any aspirate, dragged like a ploughshare through rich but heavy soil. The Heighs were writ large in our Country History, yes; and the maternal shipping interests were responsible for Chinese idols and big ivory chessmen and Malay creeses, pride of my young heart as I showed them to occidental guests; but this fellow seemed fairly compassed about with ancestors who fired at the whites of British eyes on Bunker Hill, or counted Pine-Tree Shillings, or even cut its cross out of the haughty banner of St. George. He owned a sail-boat "down at Nahant"; I could not say *Nahant* after he had once said it; *Nahant* stuck in my throat. I referred to it as "that place." To this day I am a mere fool at the word. He had been abroad, too, — had seen London and Paris, — "Pariss." He meant Parus, of course. His uncle, Dighton Perry, called him Rollo; but his actual name was Waltham Eliot; it is the kind of name, you mark, that a girl in solitude writes down with a "Mrs." in front of it. Now I had certain remote ancestors named Highbury, and one day, dis-



covering the fact, I asked my father and mother, not without some asperity of tone, why, then, they had not named me Highbury, — Highbury Heigh. — “We thought,” said my sire, pleasantly, “of Seth.” — I left the room.

A terrible dandy, this fellow, with long words in his talk that I fancy were unusual even with the youth of Boston; he had, nevertheless, qualities which put out of the question any idea of treating him as a negligible and kickable mamma's-boy. He knew nothing of horses; but when I tried him with a nasty colt we had, he took three falls, set his teeth, — they had just escaped disaster on a near stone, — and refused scornfully my now profuse and anxious advice that he should retire on a certificate of pluck. The colt surrendered. “I'll not be bullied by anything,” he said grimly, “man or beast.” — “No, by gosh!” said I, classically, and shook hands with him.

Of course he cut me out with Kriemhild West; and she deserted me, as she had come to me, by that dear ecclesiastical route trodden of woman everywhere in every time. We all knew in those days what happened to an Unitarian when he died; and here was a fine brand to be plucked from the burning. A Sunday or so after his arrival, Waltham Eliot was carried off to church by Kriemhild and her aunts; and I happen to



have accurate information about a curious scene which occurred there, and which I like to remember now while I am setting down memorials of my friend's cocky and Bostonically pompous youth. On the drive to church he was quite the society fledgling, gazing around with a smile or else a remark, full of his broad *a*, at rusticities of folk afoot. He was good enough to approve the church itself; wrapped in ivy and set against a background of woods, with a great weeping willow by the door, it gave him a lead for architectural comment and European reminiscence politely addressed to the aunts. It made Kriemhild feel very young. His correct but unenthusiastic entry of the sacred building was fairly awesome to her; and he sat down in the pew by his fair hostess with a patient urbanity as of one whom all this pious pother should not unduly bore. She was afraid to look at him, mindful of provocative bonnets and eccentric worshippers on every hand; but it was not so long before she was forced to look at him, and the result was a surprise. It was in the chanting of the *Te Deum*, where a certain sweet and sympathetic voice was left to bear alone those words about the Incarnation . . . *When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man thou didst humble thyself to be born of a virgin.* . . . Mystery and remoteness of the fact disappeared at touch of so soft a voice and yielded to the



deeper mystery that followed. *When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death....* Master Waltham Eliot, of Boston, was not the first gentleman of pronounced rationalistic convictions through whose soul this great traditional majesty of emotion has made its way as with flame. He told me once that all the history and romance he had ever read seemed to take shape before his eyes; here, a great throng of martyrs who had followed this master through the sharpness of death, and there, an army of knights, crusaders, gentlemen, with flashing swords... *Christo et Ecclesiae....* The one thing in this world that a brave man asks is something in which he can believe and for which he can fight.... The prayer-book, which the boy and the girl were holding between them, shook. Was he laughing at this rustic performance? She glanced shily at his face. It was flushed to the hair, and his gray eyes were wet with tears.

"That was because you liked our church, wasn't it?" ran her whispered comment on the incident as they drove home and her aunt was talking to the coachman.

"Well, no, — not exactly. Your service *is* fine. But don't you know, now and then, when you read some kinds of poetry, or history, and when you really *have* to fight, — finish, you know, — or, or ... you know?"



Kriemhild didn't know, but was sure she would know before long; so she nodded her head in approbation, and Eliot, sensible of huddled English and unnecessary confidences, resumed his old manner. "Ah," he said airily, "who is the creature in white?..."

"Boy," I said, shoving my manuscript aside and my spectacles up into my hair, "do women ever know?"

"Tut, tut, Major Heigh! But see here, my uncle surely wasn't like that?"

"Yes, he was like that," I roared, for this was an imputation both on my own generation, or else my historical accuracy, and on my artistic literary skill; "he was just like that, confound you! And because he was like that, and had these quixotic ways, and was chock-full of sentiment, just so we were a sound, good America, north and south, and fought our great war for ideas...and left the country to be ruined by money-sharps who worship nothing but smartness and success, and don't believe in goodness or ideals or God or love...."

"Major, — now, Major! And is *this* your comment on to-night's dinner as well as your advice on Tuesday's interview?"

"Pardon me, my boy. I'll read on. But your uncle *was* like that."

"I want to hear more of him."



I pulled down my spectacles and read.

The Boston boy and I were finding each other at a prodigious rate. He was no mere city "soft," and I grew accustomed to his big words. I, too, was not the yokel of the West that he had feared to find me. In fact, my home, my dignified sire, my gentle and gracious mother, our life of quiet content, our horses, our broad estate, reminded this cosmopolitan of the landed gentry in Great Britain. "I'm a democrat, Heigh," he informed me; "yes, by Jove! But do you know, it's great to have the tenants and servants and labourers touch their hats to you as they do over there. You'd be a squire. Well, one day you'll own all this." He glanced at the harvest fields yellow beyond the greensward of our lawn. I was moved to confidences, translating rapidly into the vernacular my dreams of a remote ownership, giving the future Mrs. Heigh, though without hint of her identity, a most conspicuous place.

"Ah," said Eliot, glancing at me and then away into space. "Marriage! H'm.... Lottery, Heigh, infernal lottery!"

We exchanged a few unnecessarily cordial compliments, and recollected for each a pressing engagement at home. We parted with quite superfluous warmth, and made eager tryst for the next morning. There are times when a man must be alone.



For me the great revulsion of feeling came that night. I sacrificed newborn friendship on the altar of a fearful jealousy. To the roar of a thunderstorm, with the damp wind keen in my fluttering nightrobe and playing about my bare legs, I stood at the open window, heedless of danger, and knew for the first time in my life the old Homeric truth that our business on earth is to enact hell. Heaven itself set the scene for me. Crash went a tree in our garden! "Ha!" I said, with an irresolute jump, open to two interpretations. — "He does not know the bulldog in us Heighs," I muttered. "And yet I love him. And she does not know me, — tender and true that I am. O Jonathan, my brother! And O Kriemhild!" The rain began to pour in, and I went to bed. Next morning our wet, glittering, sun-flooded neighbourhood was a haunt of ancient peace, and Eliot came in for his dish of late strawberries and cream. We went down and examined the shattered tree. "Well," he said, looking at me keenly but kindly, "there are plenty more trees in the world." "There are," said I. Just after breakfast, you know, is man's hour, and friendship rises superior to love, with the "need of a world of men." A few days more, however, and that conceited, silly girl made us two the firmest of friends, heedless what planet ruled. She snubbed us both,



impartially, directly, disgustingly. For her own reasons, she took a distant and even contemptuous attitude toward us, telling us plainly we were mere boys; she was evidently mortifying the flesh, in obedience to the advice of the bishop at her confirmation, for she read a book about sisterhoods, talked of foreign missions, adored clergymen and advocated celibacy for them, and refused candy at all hours. We called it "candy" then; and I call it so yet. She quoted that bishop incessantly; he was her ideal of the complete man; and oh, could she but live out her short but devoted life at his feet! So she would murmur and bleat in a real girl's voice, with her wide-opened eyes fixed on a spot about two feet above our heads. There was no reasoning with her. When we referred to other spheres of activity and other ideals of manhood, she smiled gently and said she knew that boys always wished to be either a conductor on a street-car or a trapper in the far West. This pained Eliot to the quick; and it was now his turn to feel young in a kind of impotency of exasperation which tried his urbanity almost beyond its strength. She smiled again, to see the shaft well home; addressed me Johnny Heigh, as if I played with a pet lamb; bowed carelessly to Eliot; and excused herself, — we were calling at the house



one fine summer morning, with vague propositions for a picnic in the afternoon, — excused herself, because “some gentlemen are coming to dinner, and my aunts need my help. Servants, you know,” she added, “are the plague in life for us women. — Well, good-bye, — boys.” — Boys! Women! — We walked away, two hearts with but a single beat, fused in a common and outraged manhood. I was a youth of concrete, not to say crude ideas; and I suggested that we should concentrate our attack upon this anæmic piosity of the girl by calling the bishop evil and jocose names in our demoiselle’s own white teeth. Eliot was not averse from some scheme of the sort; but our plan broke down when it came to a test, partly in view of Kriemhild’s austerity, and partly from a want of agreement which one of us should begin. We saw little of her for a while, betaking ourselves to manly practices. Long walks were made during a cool fortnight which came as blessed interval in our fierce Pennsylvania heats; and as I was strong in farming lore, though mainly by the higher criticism, I could explain many agricultural processes and situations to our guest. He asked me intelligent questions about the rotation of crops, spoke with approval of the comfort to be found in rural life, and puzzled me with these new proclivities until I drew his



darker purpose from him. He was half minded, he said, to renounce the dull routine of law, seek an available farm, and give himself up to the charms of quiet and meditation, "like Horace, you know," he instanced, "or like Mr. Emerson at Concord."—Emerson? "But," I said, "Emerson is an infidel!"

"Infidel your grandmother!" cried Eliot, in high dudgeon and quite in the dialect which I habitually employed. Then, swiftly mindful of the havoc which theological prejudices had wrought in our relations to the other sex, he swiftly took refuge in reminiscence and a courteous plea for toleration. "Of course, they say things about him here because he is an Unitarian. But, Heigh, — he is a minister!"

"Is he? I didn't know that. And my father says you may read him, 'with caution,' when you're grown up. Yes, father reads him."

"Your father," said Eliot, with deliberate emphasis, "is a gentleman."—He seemed to hold me out a patent of nobility.—"And as for your Uncle Charles! Heigh, didn't he meet the Duke of Wellington over there?"

"Dined with him," I answered as casually as I could.

"Ah, well, you see," continued Eliot, sagely, and yet kindly, as if he himself had brought



about the invitation. — “Look here, Heigh, — it is all so about that duel?”

“Of course it is, only I’ll get a licking — almost — if you peach.”

“Not I. — But he *did* pink the frog-eating coward, eh? Ha! — Look here, Heigh!” He spoke very solemnly, and glanced about us with a frown of interrogation for possible eaves-droppers. All was serene. We stood in the shade of an apple tree that overhung the road; a cool breeze played above us, and a bird chirped from the bough. Eliot came close to me. “Heigh, *there are too few gentlemen in this country!* I don’t mean just manners. I don’t mean education: look at Harvard College!” His bearing at this word had the effect of a Roman Catholic crossing himself. “No, sir. I mean gentlemen like your Uncle Charles, who know what honour means. I am a puritan, sir. But the South is right in demanding that a gentleman shall defend his honour. Heigh, don’t laugh. I have made a vow. *I take no insult from an equal, without its consequences.* This is between you and me. It may sound like bragging, sir, — but it’s not. No, sir, — if a man insults me one of these days, and is in my class, he fights me, — fights me. Fists? *No*, sir. *SWORDS!*” — He paced on.

It was tremendous. I felt that the Heigh humour, which had showed signs of life, must be



stified at any cost ; and I walked beside him as grave as he was himself. Presently he stopped again.

“Heigh, that was a foolish confidence, perhaps. Nobody else knows it. Nobody. And now, old man, your hand. We are friends now ; no religious opinions . . . and no girl, — no girl, — shall come between me and the man I’ve talked to as I talked to you.”

*No girl should come between us !* The shade of jealousy was banned, and we began eagerly to belittle Eros with good-will, calling examples from bygone time to hearten us. “Where,” queried Waltham Eliot, “would Luther have come out, if he had been hampered by such things. ‘God help me. I can no other.’ — Eh ?”

“Or Washington crossing the Delaware,” I added, remembering the picture, “if *he’d* had a mess of women in the boat !” This was humour, and we laughed at the merry conceit. A country-store was near us, and I dragged in my friend that we might drink a mug of root-beer to our eternal friendship. He commended the vintage, and I, moved beyond my wont, recited to him, in low but meaning tones, some verses of T. Moore which I had lately met in a volume of *Choice Selections*, and which seemed to me expressive as might be : —



“Friend of my soul, this goblet sip;  
’Twill chase the pensive tear;  
’Tis not so sweet as woman’s lip,  
But, ah! ’tis more sincere.”

“You’re right, my boy,” said Waltham Eliot;  
“dead right.”



## II

THEN the weather went back from cool to hot, and from hot to sheer broiling. — “What were you going to say, Eliot?”

I looked up from my manuscript, and saw my young guest shaking his head. “Major, Major,” he groaned; “how much history do you allow to this romance? About a gill to a gallon? And my uncle seems such an infernal prig! ‘Honour!’ — Why, I believe I prefer Upps himself to this mirage of yours. Upps is solid.”

“Not at all. We were idealists. Youngsters now don’t make swords out of old lath and act, as I and my boy friends used to do, *Ivanhoe* or the *Fair Maid of Perth*! How can you? You’ve no sentiment. You’ve no imagination. You’ve no ideals. And you don’t even read *Ivanhoe* and the *Fair Maid of Perth*!”

“They jam that sort of thing into us at school and tire us of it.”

“More’s the pity.”

“But, Major, surely you agree that my good uncle ought to have been jolly well spanked at the outset of his idealism? All that tall



talk is absolutely immoral. And haven't *you* stuck some big words into his mouth?—Eh, Major?"

"No, sir. No. Not *consciously*, at least. And confound you, listen! See what you make of your uncle when I've told all the story. Wait for the end."

"Is it...in sight?"

I shook my fist at him, and went on. —

That day when the weather turned was a memorable one for Waltham Eliot and me. Sunrise came bright and keen over a pomp of latter August, with cornfields waving in the wind, a deeper green in the rain-scoured foliage of oak and chestnut, and spots of premature red on the huge maple by our drive. My friend stepped briskly in, greeted my mother in his chivalrous way, and then clapped me on the shoulder, man to man. "Well, Damon," he said, in his airy Boston fashion, "and what shall it be this morning?"

There was nothing particular to do, and that was the pity of it; an active bout at ball, a hard walk, had averted tragedy. We loafed and dallied, halting at the barn to look at a lame horse, to inspect the setter pups, and sauntering out upon the road. Up or down? Dice of fate, ye ever loaded, why was it *up*? The breeze had fallen; the sun was pouring out



heat of the steady, veteran sort which August alone can breed, which courses along the blood till it begets a whim, and then turns that whim into a passion. I flung a stone at a corpulent robin, coming close to slaughter.

"Why do you do that?"

"Shut up," quoth I, in my dissolute Pennsylvania drawl. — We were passing Uncle Charles's gate; another shameless old epicure, digesting worms behind his flaunting red waistcoat, sat on the post; I made a second and more elaborate attempt to kill.

"Huh!" sneered Boston.

"What do you mean by your *Huh*?"

"*Successful* cruelty is something; *that*, —" he finished with an excellent imitation of a shrug. He was very cutting, and my sarcasm was out of repair.

"Get up on the post yourself and give me a shot at double distance. We'll see who'll *huh*!"

"You have a queer notion of personal combat, Heigh. However, —"

"However what?"

"Never mind, my good man. Never mind." He drew out a handkerchief and wiped his brow. "Deuce of a climate! Ninety odd in the shade, I'm sure, or I'm a codfish. — Gad!"

"I wouldn't curse, anyway."

"Curse? Curse? My good man, —" He



seemed to like the phrase ; “My good man, —” he repeated. I did not like it, and said so. He informed me I might change adjective and noun as I pleased. In any case, he withdrew the noun.... The affair grew unsatisfactory. And at this moment, round a bend of the road came Kriemhild West. She gave an appropriate start as she saw us, and let her sunshade drop back upon her shoulder. Her eyes were bright and dancing; some cause, whether from within or from without, had clearly changed her mood; and both Eliot and I could not resist an impulse to glance each at the other in query what this meant. Bishops, missions, and all ascetic views of life, had certainly had their day; the rose at her bosom, the poise of her head, the coolness and freshness of her provocative youth, combined in unmistakable evidence that she was once more upon the true business of womankind. Sixteen she was; at this delicious mark on the dial, her English ancestress, of a century or so before, had been thought more than ripe for marriage.... There is still this differencing grace in Kriemhild; it passed, with maturity, into her character; but then in the old days, it ruled without admixture as convincing but inexplicable charm. Like all women whose loveliness of face and form is backed by character, she still has the youthful appeal; she



defies time with the magic of that incommunicable secret which the ancients knew as beauty, but which our crass generations seldom try to see and never understand. Her white hair now has the look of...I must cross this out when I put in the false names. — “Did you speak, Eliot?”

“No, Major, I did not speak.”

“I thought you did. — I wonder you’re not laughing.”

“No, Major, I am not laughing.”

“Yes. — Quite so. Where was I? — Ah.” — Well, the long and short of it was that she looked at us both, nodded on the level, — if you know what I mean, — laughed merrily and asked us where was the funeral. “Eat something sweet,” she commanded. “You seem to need it.” And with that she extended a paper of bon-bons to Waltham Eliot. “Strangers first, — John,” she sparkled, as she turned to me. “Now for friends.”

“Of course he’s a friend. Ha! Why do Quakers call themselves friends, Miss West? Is it because they never fight anybody?”

Kriemhild gave a smile to the jester, a look of sympathy to me, and for both of us declared that here were at least two good friends of hers who didn’t, wouldn’t, couldn’t, and shouldn’t fight. — “*Boys* fight,” she added sententiously;



it was the *amende honorable*. But I looked gloomy. I never enjoyed chaff; and the Boston variety called out my particular ire. "My grandmother was a Quaker, Mr. Eliot," she added impressively.

"I shall reverence the sect forever," announced the facile youth. I suppose he got some of this tall talk out of novels, and the rest was just Boston and precocity in even portions. He went on in his airy style. "We burned the Quakers up our way once, I believe, or hanged them; but bless me, you burn us poor Bostonians to the fourth generation when we visit you in summer. Ninety-five in the shade! And *you* look so bewitchingly cool, — though we are holding you here in the road like a pair of highwaymen. — Heigh!" He nodded to me authoritatively, by way of hint that there were social duties here for him who could see them. But Kriemhild held her ground. With the air of a chess-player who opens for a fool's mate in the most accidental way, "Are you going," she queried, "to the lawn-party, — the *fête champêtre*, you know, — at Mrs. Riddle's?" It was brave French; and we knew that she referred to festivities at a country-place some miles away. Misogynists of late, we two had agreed that, if we went, we should look on haughtily awhile, and disappear after exaggerated politeness to the elderly ladies



and a few words on current politics to the host. Our views were not so definite now.

"I'm not doing much in that line, you know," said Waltham Eliot, in monastic tones. — I, for my part, said I guessed I'd go.

"And which of you will drive me...us, I mean, over there?" She fairly sparkled. "You see, aunts are going to drive for a call on old Mrs. Blessys, and she lives only a mile from Mr. Riddle; and our coachman is busy; and aunts thought — one of you would drive us. There's only room for one."

Normally situated, I should have seen through this "one of you" in an instant. The old ladies knew me as a driver proved and worthy of all trust; while Dighton Perry, a sadder and wiser uncle in the case of his own horses, had proclaimed loudly and everywhere the nephew's unfitness even for juvenile recreations in a goat-cart. Aunts, of course, had simply sent word to Johnny Heigh that he was a nice boy, and, their compliments, would he come to their rescue as charioteer; but the message was entrusted to Helen of Troy. All this went through my head just five seconds after we had both exploded in affirmation of zeal without bounds.

"How good you both are," she said. And I remember the little dry insects in the grass about us that rasped out their acute accent of



the heat in a kind of choral repetition. "How-good-you-both-are!"

"Well, say which one is to do it," said I. I began to see the plot and was impatient; and the sun on that dusty road fairly set one's brain dancing.

"I shall make an enemy for life!"

"Try it." — I felt this to be conversation.

"Maybe fate will send a substitute," suggested the Bostonian.

"If George Clayton came from West Point this morning instead of to-night...."

"Cousins should be barred."

A little noise behind us made me glance over my shoulder. The Heighs are a practical race. "Here *is* a substitute," I said, and laughed heartily at my idea. "Here comes Linsey Cards. He'll do. — Linsey, you're wanted." — Now who was Linsey Cards?

Nobody knew. He had come years before to Philadelphia, a mere baby, with a father who gave lessons in writing, took futile shots at literature, tried to make a living while warding off consumption, and died at about the proper point in that unequal strife. Mild as a sheep, pathetically deferential, this melancholy *artiste manqué* was stubborn on one point; he would say nothing of his own past, or of the wife who died before she had fairly trodden city streets; it looked, observant folk remarked, like a prom-



ise made to her. They had the air of an expatriated, romantically loving couple who had married against the wishes of flinty parents at home. Some vague rumour had it that the wife was a country girl of good strain out Ohio way, and made a runaway match with her feckless but amiable teacher of "penmanship." From the old ambrotype of them, Cards's sole inheritance, you saw that this wife had determination and energy enough for fifty men. She had given the boy his name, Linsey Attila Cards; it smacked of intelligent nomads in the West, meeting a stray history or cyclopædia here and there. And so our Cards was a clanless person. Without that consumptive sire, his ovine acquiescence in everything from rejected poems to the price one chose to pay him for his copying, his absurd hair, his apologetic cough, his uncanny suggestion of Italian organ-grinders — without all this, it would have been a fair case of romance for Linsey Cards. We could have taken Scottish ancestry for granted, spelled it "Lindsay" and set him up as the lost heir; but, as a case of charity, it failed to touch any imaginative chords; and my maternal uncle, who always asked, with a delicate intake of the breath and a halfway closing of the eyes, whether one "had blood," referred to young Cards as "the Foundling whom we employ at the office and find very



biddable." *Foundling* was asinine, of course. I have seen many asses, by the way, in the course of a long life, but nothing so thoroughly the ass, and Philadelphia ass at that, as my maternal uncle. He had "blood"; but something had got into his milk. Even my mother, with all her reverence for kin, laughed at his silly affectations. Still, we felt nothing wrong about his attitude toward Cards, considered as attitude; it was the expression of it that got on our nerves. My father, who had first given work to the poor poet, and then rescued orphan Linsey from sordid and precarious existence in the family of a German cobbler, sending the boy to school, and finally putting him into the office, always treated his charge as an equal and predicted fine things of him. A portrait of my father hangs to-day in Cards's private office.... And here was this fellow now, nineteen, stocky, shy, efficient, and of a silence almost preternatural, taking his two weeks' vacation at a farm-house near by and admitted to some intercourse with Eliot and me. I conceded his sharpness in figures, his strength and skill in games, his efficiency on errands, but resented my sire's proclivity to make an example of him for me. My sense of humour leaped to life at this chance to offset the Bostonian and his knight-errant ways.



"Come here, Linsey," I said.

He had lifted his hat, not with the movement of custom, and yet not like a clown. He blushed slightly, but did not look the fool. — "Well?" he asked me.

"Oh! — Why, — you know Bill Riddle? The old man's in the office."

"Well?"

"Bill told me to tell you to come to the lawn-party this afternoon. Yes he did, Kriemhild! Honest injun, Linsey! I forgot it. Miss Patty wants somebody to drive her and Miss West over there. We — Eliot and I — can't do it, — you see? You are to do it."

Diplomacy, humour, and truth seldom travel together, as I now began to perceive. Eliot had struck an attitude of contemptuous patience; and Cards was looking straight at me, the flush in his face deepened by hearing from his fair neighbour something uncommonly like a suppressed snort. — I cannot withdraw the word. — Then he spoke.

"I think Miss West does not care for that arrangement," he said; and his tone carried such a sense of aloofness and of alien interests bravely borne, that Waltham Eliot glanced at him in sympathy. But my blood was up, the Heigh blood which likes to see a thing through.

"Linsey Cards won't upset you, at any rate," I remarked to Kriemhild, ignoring her rapidly



telegraphed disapproval, and enjoying my allusion to Eliot's experience with Dighton Perry's carriage. The shot went home. The Bostonian turned to me with his icy manner. "Thank you," he said. "I thank you. — Miss West, I withdraw in favour of these gentlemen who know how... to drive. Until this afternoon!" And he lifted his hat, Chesterfield, Grandison, Saladin, and George the Fourth, all combined in an obeisance to her and a haughty salute to us. Kriemhild took the cue, allowing herself first the luxury of one "face," a slight but unmistakable "face," for my benefit.

"I suppose," she said with awful distinctness of utterance, "that *somebody* will come and the *somebody* will *have* to be John Heigh." Then she bowed to Eliot in her best dancing-school manner, smiled graciously to his previous words, and, crying *au revoir* to him in an exhilarating French, smiled again, ignored Cards utterly, and went swiftly home.

Waltham Eliot felt that he had scored. He, too, smiled slightly, and consulted his watch. "Well, fellows," he remarked airily, "let us retreat to our several shelters, — trees, — ice-houses, — whew! — or else this damnable heat will give us all East Indian livers. I taste curry now!" Later privilege of intercourse with the Eliot family satisfied me that this preposterous



phrase, entirely unintelligible at the time, was a combination of Uncle George, the cosmopolitan, and a recent perusal of *Vanity Fair*. But it did its business. I fell back on mere bucolic retort.

"It's a good enough climate for *men*," I said. "Codfish don't like it. And Linsey, old cock, it's a good climate for driving in a cool linen suit, with a pretty girl by you, and *tolls at the bridges*, — eh?"

Waltham Eliot's face grew cloudy again.

"Only," I went on in my buckish way, thinking myself a very Pelham the while, "you'll have to put blinders on the aunts."

"Oh!" burst out Waltham Eliot. And then, to my astonishment, the taciturn Cards made me a harangue. "Don't talk that way, please." — The fellow was my father's rescue from orphan-asylums, newspaper-selling, what not! — "Don't talk that way. You are going to drive Miss West, and you ought not to put me into such a position. What is the use of all this? You and she are in the same class...."

At this, Waltham Eliot suddenly threw back his head and whistled a loud, martial air; and I thought it high time for fists, pushing by Cards, who, however, held his ground, averting my imminent outburst as he pointed down the road. Our carriage came rolling easily along,



my mother in it; she waved a cheery salute to us, and gave her special smile to Eliot. "Bring them both in to dinner, dear," she called to me.

This was the second interference of Woman. But it set me thinking, and something like remorse came over me for my lapse in dignity and my jests. And this Boston fellow was standing close to our very gates.... I have only two moods.

"Fellows," I said, Eliot starting at my change of tone, "it *is* hot, and I suppose I'm an ass. Let's drop it all. Come in to dinner."

"Thank you very much," said the person for whom this invitation was meant as a halfway apology; "but I think not to-day, — thanks." — *He* had a middle manner. — Cards said he guessed not, thank you very much, too, — and he guessed he'd cut across to Davis's. But Eliot stopped him.

"Can't you call for *me*, Cards, this afternoon? Can't you bring a team of some sort and take me? My uncle's horses.... Well, can you?"

We both assured Cards that his invitation was in due form; and indeed Mr. Riddle, who was a kind of partner in my maternal uncle's firm, had bidden Cards by word of mouth. The young fellow was encouraged in this way on all harmless occasions. But now he looked doubtful.



"I should like to talk more with you," said Eliot, who was vastly pleased with Cards in the short encounters he had already had with him, "about Harvard College."

Talk of education always drew Cards like a magnet. "I can get Davis's plug and welcome," he said. "*Perhaps* he'll pull us all the way. Can you stand a dirty old buggy, though?"

"With your company?" — It was gracefully said. "Till three o'clock, then!" He nodded to Cards, waved a judicious farewell to me, then clasped his hands behind him and paced the roadside toward his uncle's home with that measured tread and that poise which one sees in old prints of Napoleon at St. Helena.

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I donned the cool linen suit, to be sure; but coolness was a stranger to my physical and moral man that afternoon, as I handed the aunts into their open two-seated carriage and offered my respectful assistance to Kriemhild. The maid, still more bewitching than ever in her festal array, spurned all help, and gave me one disdainful glance as she sprang lightly in and seated herself as far from me as space would allow. There is no disdain like a girl's. The old ladies retreated behind their parasols, safe with Johnny Heigh at the reins and a horse in the shafts that was fit to be a deacon for his



sobriety; Kriemhild, too, rattled up her sunshade and tilted it well to me-ward, sitting there erect and remote; and I, in that topless, varnished, sun-smitten vehicle, drove as it were alone into the flaming West. I drew out a handkerchief and wiped my brow; a jolt sent my companion's parasol denting into my cheek. "Pardon me," she said coldly. — "Certainly," was my pavid reply. — The horse had fallen into a walk by reason of what he called a hill; I had no spirit to dispute it with him. The old ladies came from cover. — "How careful Johnny is! — What are you two chattering about?" And they fell back to their gossip.

Was I built on the lines of common manhood? I essayed society talk. — "When do you get in your potatoes?" she asked me, and hummed a small tune without awaiting my indignant reply. I grew "mad" — and dignified. Sitting straight, and putting the old horse to his business, I spied well in front of us a wabbling, dilapidated buggy pulled by an animal that iron flails could not rouse from a shambling gait, half walk and half trot. "Well," I cried out involuntarily, "well, I *will* be darned!"

"Not here!" she said superbly.

"Well," I said, "that's Davis's team, and your fine friend is in it. I don't want to exaggerate, but I *think*, — I *think* — this Bucephalus of yours can



and will overtake them !” Four syllables, — and a good dose of sarcasm. She paid no attention to it. Gazing at the crazy, curtainless outfit, we could both see the sturdy figure of Cards and, intimately beside him in the attitude of gracious converse, our easy and aristocratic Bostonian. . . . I braced myself for the very worst of female scorn and disdain ; can ever man who is born of woman tell what woman will do whether on a throne or on a bicycle ? We were rapidly overhauling the buggy, but not half so swiftly as my companion’s tongue loosened and moved in animated, friendly phrase. Her eyes beamed pleasantly upon me ; amazed, I apologized for my rude remark about her aunt’s horse. — “ Ask aunt if I may drive, just with *you* some day, behind *Major* ! ” Major was our own pet Morgan. . . . I was thrilled to the heart. — “ This parasol is a nuisance ! ” She furled it, smiling ; and under cover of the movement came near enough to touch me, to brush my elbow. Along my veins ran the exultation of joy, speeding somehow to the astonished horse, who suddenly remembered from what ancestors he sprang and mended his pace to a miracle. I sat like a god, Kriemhild close to me, and so we flashed by that desolation of loose boards and wabbling wheels. . . . Absorbed, chattering, laughing into my very face, she turned with a splendid ejacu-



lation of surprise as we clove the dust of Davis's rig and for a second or so were abreast of the pair. Interruption of intimate converse with me; astonishment; gracious pity; those were three cards which my companion threw rapidly on the table for the benefit of Waltham Eliot.... How pale and saintly his face looked in the sift of that golden dust, his straw hat on his lap, his attitude so correct!... By his side, Cards looked grubby. The aunts said so, and bewailed certain phases of democratic life; kindness was one thing, "But in *our* day, Johnny," — ah! Mr Riddle had asked him, yes. And after all who were the Riddles? They said this young Cards would make his money, did they? Thank heaven, Philadelphia might see many an evil time, but never one when money could buy its way into real society; never that. "We leave that to New York, Johnny, — don't we?" — The "we" soothed me like slow notes on a violin; and how tenderly I helped those dear old dames down for their long afternoon with Mrs. Blessys! — I climbed nimbly back, drove proudly off, and was alone with the sweet of the year. Now, blood of all the Heighs!

The parasol was still furled; but it was propped against the seat between us... like a sword. I knew a bit of history! I wished, too, that there had been no empty seat behind us; the



breath of the dusky Horatian attendant seemed to float thence by me and leave me cold at the heart. The situation was not normal; by bucolic reckoning a "buggy" was indicated for our case, and some men working in the fields gave needlessly emphatic voice to this view. I repressed the retort, and glanced uneasily at Kriemhild; she sat haughtily indifferent. Silence for a minute or two; and then we came into a stretch of road with woods on each side, cool, solitary as the primeval forest, and down a long incline the glimmer of rippling water, and a bridge.

"Darby Bridge!" I was about to say, like a guide-book, but bit my tongue; statistics! I felt that she was looking at the bridge; did she know, — suspect, — wish? The sympathetic horse fell into a deliberate walk....

"Are you so fond of Quaker-meeting? — I'm not." She was apparently addressing some one on the fence. — "Go on and talk about something, — crops! — How many *more* miles have we to go?" Three neat little stabs for a maid of sixteen, and quite new to her work.

I made a cheerful calculation of the distance, giving two conflicting authorities and stating my own emphatic preference.

"So much?" — She yawned like the duchess in a sewing-girl's novel. Then she begged my pardon with great asperity; frowned; and pro-



ceeded to laugh outright, stopping suddenly like one of those waterfalls in Switzerland when the franc's worth is exhausted. "How excellently you do *drive*!" And with that she began to hum a little tune, the same diabolical Frenchy thing I had heard Eliot hum in the morning. Just then the sagacious old horse put his foot upon the bridge; some birds flew up from one end of a loose plank and perched upon a sapling that slanted over the brook; freshness came about us from the broken water below, as it foamed and dashed by great rocks; and I remembered that I was man.

Your boy's heart is a strange tryst for beasts and gods at once. I trembled a little, shifted the reins to my right hand, bent over, and kissed her.

"You will never do that again, you know," she said evenly; and her face, when I dared to look at her, was inscrutably cold and calm save for a slight quiver about the corners of the mouth. — Would she weep? — What had I done? A revulsion of feeling was on me; my intentions were of the most honourable character; and what yokel trick had I played on this bright and beauteous creature entrusted to my care! *Remorse*: like Randolph of Roanoke, I saw the word in lurid letters above the horse's ears, whither I now directed my melancholy gaze. "Forgive me, Kriemhild!" I murmured.



A little catching noise in her breath was all my reply.... Had I only sent those beasts packing a minute ago! In revenge I gave audience to all the gods that my soft heart could hold....

“Eliot!”

“Well, Major.”

“Are you laughing?”

“The laugh you would like, Major!”

“You know, I suspect these audiences with the gods are sometimes out of order! Eh?”

“I think you might have kept... well, one of the milder beasts on guard, Major! Women are said to be fond of animals.... If you had...”

“Do you think so, boy?”

“A dashed good chance, sir! Two to one on you, anyway, against that preposterous uncling of mine, would have been *my* bet, if —”

“Ah, — if. Well, it wasn’t.”

“So it seems. But keep the gods or angels *now*, Major. They ought to be grateful. — And what happened next?”

Well, I’ll tell you — cutting the manuscript a bit. The horse whisked his confounded old tail, as if in disgust, and struck into a trot. He wanted to get away from such a scene. It jolted us; I did what good drivers never ought to do, and gave him a cut for his pains; and away we went. Kriemhild said, “Oh!” — and indeed it was not like me, I grant you.



We sat at the respective ends of our seat ; and presently more bitterness came in the shape of some fellows in a barnyard, who sung out to us not to be "mad," but kiss and make up. — I was peer to these ; and theirs was the oracle I had followed ! And I sighed. And presently — the Riddle gateway was just looming ahead of us — Kriemhild West broke out into a long, merry laugh, a girl's laugh, a good laugh, a silvery, sweet laugh. I faced around and made my clumsy, honest plea for grace. She put her hand very lightly on my shoulder. "Oh, John, John !" was all she said. It was encouraging, but not perspicuous. "What do you mean ?" I queried. "*You'll* never know," she answered, as we drove into the populous lawn.... I don't know now....

"Eliot !"

"Yes, Major."

"I never tried to find out anywhere else."

"I knew *that*, sir."

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Well, the lawn-party ran its course as such affairs always do. Waltham Eliot and a girl from New York were our distinguished guests, and neither of them achieved an unqualified triumph. The athletic damsel had not arrived in 1855, but we were fond of healthy cheeks and red lips, of white sound teeth, of eyes bright with



exercise; the Quaker element, and also, I hope, the right strain in us, kept maiden manners reasonably quiet. But here in the Gothamite woman were loud, shrill ways, a pasty complexion, much darting and languishing of the glance, and a too exuberant fashion of dress. Only the outright country boys were taken in; Philadelphia scents New York pretences at a league away. No, the girl made a poor run of it. Eliot, however, could have won hands down, but for his ways and his speech; opinion among the boys set against him as a sayer of things not understood of the people. The girls were ready to worship him, but he spurned their cult; and Mr. Congreve, in a famous tragedy now seldom read, notes the effect of scorn upon the female heart. His assiduity of attention to Kriemhild West amounted to monopoly. I found myself among the boys—one must be fair and square with a rival—defending his good name as swimmer, wrestler, ball-player, and general man of his hands. The girls cared for none of these things; but were almost offensive in their pointed remarks about Kriemhild's lack of reserve. She was fairly excited, and queened the place in her triumphant beauty. Once, as she passed me, she looked me sparkling in my face, and whispered—"I supposed you would be getting up a game of Copenhagen by



now — John Heigh ?” Copenhagen was a kissing-game, detested by matrons, and used only for rustic merry-makings like the Union Sunday-school picnic. I blushed hotly, fumbled for my retort ; and she was gone. . . . But I was to drive her home. Copenhagen, quotha ? — I looked over my mental menagerie.

At last it was time to go. “ Kriemhild West ? Oh, somewhere — of course — with that Boston boy ! Yes, your horse is ready.” I sought her.

I found her hanging over a rustic bridge, less than a stone’s throw from the throng, but hidden by thick shrubbery, and with that Boston boy indeed at her side, abominably at her side. It was the fashion in those days for women to wear very full sleeves ; and girls of Kriemhild’s age were free of the custom. Engaged in the amiable and absorbing business of shying pebbles — he had gathered them for her, of course — at the minnows which darted about in the clear brook beneath, she was constantly coming into entanglements with bark and knots of the rustic handrail. Her cavalier had just offered to pin back this rebellious drapery of her round white arm. . . .

“ Major ! ”

. . . her Round White Arm, and, as I came up, was accomplishing the details of his task with a certain ghastly deliberation. In return, she was



relating him an anecdote, and extracting promises that he would "never tell..." Her dark violet eyes, the flush of her face, the sunbeams that played through the foliage upon her hair, her...

"No, Major; you must *not* go on with that. I can't stand it. It harrows me..."

— Hang you! — Well, her breath was in his very eyes. The anecdote, he assured her, was amusing beyond precedent. "Fancy!" he cried in fine virile chest-tones. "Fancy!" she repeated, taking his accent like another Christabel. Fate's hand was on us all that afternoon. I, too, fell into his damnable Bostonese, and brought out a loud "Fancy!" coupled nobly with the memorable and already imitated "*Huh!*" of our maturinal quarrel. "Huh!" I said, and paused at the planks of the bridge. — A bridge again!

"Well, I'm... I beg your pardon, Miss West! Heigh, dear man, you are abrupt, — abrupt." It was a contest between the smile of victory and the frown of annoyance as he eyed me. The smile deepened as he scanned my features, cocking his face slightly to one side. "Heigh, dear man, why this agitation? It is not — just now — repose that stamps the caste of Heigh-de-Heigh, — the Heights of Hayseed Park!"

I object to liberties with my name, and in my time have hit out on such an occasion. — "Are you training for a detective?" he went on. "I've



stolen nothing." — A slight but arch glance at Kriemhild may have been betrayal or may have been a blind for me. I was trying to whistle, and casually to announce the time to leave; Eliot should have stopped where he was, but the wine of very young love was in his veins. Perhaps, too, he chafed to think of the drive home. "I say," he called to me in a tone close upon insolence, "are you feeling all right? You look just a bit yellow about the gills, dear man. Cigar? Of course not. Corn-silk in a penny pipe? No? Well, my word, then it's the lemonade! Eh, Heigh? *Heigh?* — It's the *limonado!*"

"Oh, Mr. Eliot! *Don't* mind him, — Johnny!"

Johnny! Mr. Eliot! That infernal *Heigh!* Bolts and shackles! I knew *what* to do; but *how?* Suddenly I saw. — In my dear old Uncle Charles's lumber-room I had once found a London "Book of Etiquette: the Complete Gentleman's *Vade Mecum*"; it bore the date of 1805, and reflected such deportment as bucks like Tom and Jerry, forgotten heroes, were wont to cultivate in the Regent's day. I remembered the book's section on "Behaviour under Insult"; *aplomb*, of course, haughty visage, definite word and deed. *Keep your temper in hand*, it ran. *Empty your wine-glass into the face of your opponent, but upon no consideration throw the glass also. That is vulgar.*



Good. I had no wine-glass, but a tray was near me on a little table, and although the tumblers were all gone, the pitcher was there half full of lemonade. *Limonado* he called it, eh? — I can see that flagrant beverage now; lukewarm stuff, shining dull in the sunlight, with seeds floating on it, and two flies, and a bit of bark, and a yellow hornet just dropped in, struggling angrily for escape.... I approached the table....

“Beware the bowl, — beware!” shouted Eliot, now mere boy in his triumph; Kriemhild was giggling like the hoyden she was. *Keep your temper in hand*, said the Book. Good. I grasped the pitcher steadily. *Empty into the face of your opponent*. My intentions were of the best; my nerves were not quite firm. So! — I doused my grinning young lord heartily, yes, and before the grin had died away; but a good gill of the mawkish fluid went wide, discharging itself upon Kriemhild’s gown. I saw two faces, one red, one red and white; people came up behind me; voices rang high; the bearded visage of my host confronted me. I say no more.



### III

WE all came home in some way; a boys' quarrel had been the verdict, and sympathy for Kriemhild's gown was more than balanced by a lively sense of justice achieved on the preposterous young fellow from Boston. "Asked me if I was *the local Jehu*, by gosh!" said Tom Blessys, who had been known to drive tandem. "Knock him down if he gives you any lip, Johnny!" — But it did me no good, this sympathy of youth and maid; I had cut a poor figure of it, and . . . *che farò senza Eurydice?*

Well after nightfall, I was kicking at the pebbles of our drive and rehearsing that fatal scene for the fiftieth time, with the variant might-have-been for afterpiece. Up in the dark came one of Dighton Perry's farm-hands and made me jump; "very important," he whispered, thrust a folded paper into my hand, and disappeared silently in the night. *Huh!* I muttered involuntarily, and slipped to the library window, whence came both a square of light and my father's even voice as he read *The Newcomes* — out of *Harper's Monthly Magazine* — to my



mother. There was something about a colonel dying, and my father had to stop once or twice; it seemed pathetic. Bah! What is feigned tragedy to the ills of real life, such as mine? I read my note. *Disguise your face, it ran, if you read this before the family. Meet me at the quarry not later than six-thirty to-morrow A.M. Clayton has arrived from West Point, but I fear to communicate with him on account of suspicions at Roadside.* — Roadside was Miss Patty's place. — *Cards has promised to attend us. He thinks it fists; I have not undeceived him. Procure the swords, if you please, from Colonel Chas. Heigh's library; I regret to impose this charge on you, but see no other way.* — *Your ob<sup>t</sup>. ser<sup>t</sup>., WALTHAM ELIOT.* — *P.S. Cards is strongly advised that no third name shall be mentioned; simply that the lie has been passed.* — W. E.

This formidable note, composed with great care, I read twice from end to end; as I finished, my father's voice came more broken than ever.... I listened. "At the usual evening hour the chapel-bell began to toll," he brought laboriously out, and so to the *Adsum*, where my mother sobbed aloud.... If she knew the bitterness of death hanging over her own house!...

Twice or thrice in the night I went to cool my head by the open window and to gaze, perchance for the last time, upon a new-risen waning



moon. I had settled all my affairs. On my best fishing-rod I stuck a card: "For Billy, with John's best love." Billy was my little orphan cousin who lived with us.... And so it would have to be swords, would it? He had said so in that revelation two weeks ago. And he thought Quakers would never fight, did he? He had sneered it but yesterday — yesterday! — morning. And I gazed into the deeps of the sky, and as I wondered if the katydids always made a boiler-shop of the night in that fashion, and how I always slept through it, suddenly came common sense flaring into my dark thoughts with lanterns of ridicule and a whole illumination of protest. — "Walk down to the quarry and give him a couple in the face; or, better, make it up." — So spoke the peace-democrat within me, to use a forgotten figure of war time; with what result, one may guess. Then common sense began to call me names. "Ass!" it jeered. "No," I answered; "Man!" — I went back to bed and slept uneasily until dawn.

Rising, not without a sense of firmness and decision, I dressed to the chirping of birds in the ivy, said my prayers, — boys said their prayers in those days, and men too, — and slipped Her little gift, first reading the Burial Service in it, into a pocket of my flannel shirt, close over my heart. Going noiselessly downstairs, I heard



the regular breathings of my sire, a performance of some publicity at which I was wont to laugh; this time I was aware of an almost intolerable weakness. The old house-dog thrust his nose into my hand.... Red eyes on the field of honour? I must have been nigh upon rousing the family as I blew my nose. —

They were opening the house at my Uncle Charles's; but no one saw me as I whipped into the library, took down the crossed swords, and escaped through the garden under the long grape arbours, out into the wet fields, and so at last to the quarry.

“What in thunder are you going to do with *those* things?” — Linsey Cards was agitated; he had come out to look, not, like Saul the son of Kish, for his father's asses, but for his patron's; he found, not in himself but in his company, the mood of kings. Sulky and silent, I swung a sword in each hand; Waltham Eliot stood, correct in poise, with tightly folded arms. I noted the shirt, the sleeves rolled up; he was in his socks, — I suppose for the sake of unhampered agility. His arms were a city boy's arms, just a trifle too white and meagre. But he was game. ... Suppose my sword, this ridiculous, heavy affair, came crashing down on that white skin? — Waltham Eliot made his little speech.

“Cards,” he said kindly, but firmly, “I appeal



to your discretion. Two gentlemen here," — Cards winced — "have passed the lie, — nothing else in it, sir; and they must fight. A third gentleman" — Cards smiled in a furtive fashion as Eliot made him a bow, — "will be discreet, and will see fair play. No, sir. No apologies or settlement! To any one else I should say that we would make cold meat of the man that should undertake to spoil sport, sir! Now.... Thank you, Mr. Heigh, I am sure the swords are alike; thank you... now, Cards, kindly let us take our positions. When you judge us ready ... You have no handkerchief.... Ah, that's pistols. Well, sir, count — count one — two — three : so. At *three*, Mr. Heigh and I... exactly."

I once spoke "Horatius at the Bridge" before our big school, and I know what a speech is; Eliot did well with this one, I'll say that for him. He was pale, and a word stuck here and there in his mouth, which seemed very dry. I knew how *that* was, too. But he did it; and then, that felicitous phrase about "cold meat"! It was poetry. "Are you ready, sir?" he said to me.

"I'd like a drink of water," I said frankly; "but never mind."

Linsey Cards jumped into the fray. "Certainly you must have a drink," he said. "There's a spring in the next field, and the men's bottle. I'll fetch it."



"None of that, Foxy Cards," I sung out, for I saw the working and darting of the tail of his eye. "None of that! You'll blow the thing!"

"How can I?" he said blandly. "Who's here now?" — The fields indeed lay lonely, the hay-crop all gathered, and no sign of life about us. Eliot nodded assent.

Cards was gone some time, but not more than was reasonable. The water was very refreshing indeed, and I thought how precious seemed the little things of this life, and how bountiful was the round of pleasure in the doings of an ordinary day. And now the man Cards set up a most amazing series of measurings and pacings, cocked his eye at the sun, scratched lines in the earth of the quarry, now here, now there... shook his head cannily. "I'm trying to get into the spirit of this thing," he explained, "and I tell you, here is the only level place where you can fight and not be seen from the road. And you'll have to wait about five minutes till the sun clears that bare rock. It reflects dead into one of your eyes." — Eliot balked a little, not so much at the grammar as at the statement; he began to examine and argue. The discussion seeming to be interminable, I dropped on a clean bit of ground and stared into the swallows' holes in the bank; was it too late for all the second brood? I threw a stone at one; it has been my habit



through life to throw stones ; and as this shot precipitated a little avalanche of earth and grit, Eliot jumped half out of his skin, and Cards gave a great start of surprise. Our nerves were off, for a fact. Human nature could stand the thing no longer, and I leaped up. "Confound the sun," I said. "Let's begin, rock or no rock. I'll face it."

"Very good, sir. Begin with all my heart. But I insist on lots drawn for position!" — Bayard !

A Sidney for return, I said "no," and again, "Confound the sun"; and Cards came into the thing with a volubility and a wealth of ejaculations I never knew in him before or since ; and at last whipping ourselves into some sort of slant to the solar objection, and grasping our swords in sheer extreme of nervous excitement, with "One side, Cards, if you will, kindly," and "Clear out, Lin Cards, and take your skin out of reach," and "Now, sir," and "Now, sir," and "Come on," and "Come on, then," we fell into place for the old broadsword work we had played so often with laths on exact model of the military exercise ; and Cards, awkwardly plunging about us, was in a fair way to give to glory what was meant for finance, bawling to us to wait, and nearly losing an ear as I whisked my sword once or twice to make my arm lissome ; when suddenly, above



the noise, came a "Johnny, *oh*, Johnny," in the familiar tones of our negro butler, the fastest runner on the place. Then round the quarry-wall rushed our house-dog on the bound, making savagely at Cards as the nearest approach to a culprit; then Nehemiah, the butler; and then, after some interval, my panting, horror-stricken father with a face white as chalk.... We were betrayed.

The invaders gasped for breath. Then rose a rattle of little wheels, and Uncle Charles rolled up in his chair, his face set in the queerest way; I just noted his rapid look over the field, at me, then at Eliot, at the swords, and at Cards. The expression changed a bit. Once more he looked, —at Cards, at the swords, at Eliot, at me. I met the gaze straight.... He had fought a duel himself. The sharp edge in his old eyes melted away as he held my look. "Nearer," he motioned to his negro, who panted and sweated with the run. My father still leaned against the rock, fighting for breath and speech. Uncle Charles was the only member of the new group able to use his tongue; and I noted with surprise that the slight paralytical halt had vanished from it. "Stop, Tom," —this to my father, who made mien to join us, —"stay there and blow. Stop, I tell thee. This is *my* affair. I own this quarry. —Get thy breath. —Now, boys! What's



all this? Who stole my swords? What are you doing?"

"An affair of honour, sir," said Waltham Eliot, but not too glibly.

"An affair of... what depravity!" My father was getting wind.

"Bosh, Tom! Speak fair. It's no depravity; it's a pair of young fools, — eh, you rascals?" I never wavered from a glance straight into Uncle Charles's eye; there was an odd kind of dance in it, which I feed and retained at once as my attorney for the pending investigation. — "Tom, I'll settle this end of things," he went on. "Docked pay and rations later. I command on the field. *Now*, — you! Were you going to fight in earnest, — cut, slash, eh? Do you know that those things can hurt? What *is* all this mess?"

I was about to answer Heaven knows what, when another interruption occurred. Shouldering in past Linsey Cards, who now stood discreetly in the background, came Dighton Perry, the strangest look of horror and disgust upon his face, changing to relief as he spied the principals of the affair unhurt; then — ah, ye gods! Helen of Troy herself, pale with terror and her run, leaning on her Virginian cousin, dark-haired, sallow, serious George Clayton, just arrived from West Point.



This audience was too large for the speech which Uncle Charles had planned to make us, and it probably saved us some more direct reference to the cause of contention; at any rate he showed signs of disgust. "How did *you* come here?" he queried of Dighton Perry. "Nice tryst!"

"Well," said the good uncle, mopping his face, "I suppose that idiot will send the whole country here!"

"What idiot?" I made bold to ask, in my unquenchable Heigh thirst for facts. "What idiot?"

"Why, Jake Streepser, of course. You sent him, Cards? Yes? Well, it was a wise man's errand. These two boys belong in jail, — and you in the White House, Cards!"

George Clayton of Virginia took a long look at the wise second; then turned to my Uncle Charles. Their eyes met. Dighton Perry iterated his emotion and thanks.

"Yes, you have done us a great service, Cards. What might I not have had to telegraph Boston way?"

He shuddered; and Waltham Eliot and I were not far from the same employment, as Linsey Cards told his brief story. He had seen Jake skulking behind a tree as we passed the spring, and by the excuse for water had gained time to



send the lad on the errand of betrayal. "It seemed the only thing to do," he said, "though *they*" — with a melancholy glance at us — "will not thank me for it."

"But they *shall* thank you for it, — one of them at any rate." My sire came forward with ominous frown; yet even his speech was destined to be unspoken. "Go to Halifax, Tom," cried my Uncle Charles. "The court-martial is my business. — Don't cry, Kriemhild, dear. — Boys!"

We stood before his chair already, but he beckoned us closer.

"Give me my swords. So. — Here." His servant took the weapons with great reverence and laid them down behind the vehicle. "Come here, — young fools! Come here."

We couldn't possibly go any closer to him.

He looked at us with a queer expression, and pulled his white moustache with a hand that now began to quiver a little in the old way. But his voice was all right. "Affair of honour, eh? Do you know you are two precious idiots? Eh?"

"Yes, sir. That is, — why, no, sir." This was not happy, and Eliot looked very mournful over his frustrated eloquence. I had simply assented with a nod, and kept my gaze steady.

"Well, my young whirlwind from Massachusetts, do you know 'honour' from a hill of beans?"



“The lie was passed, sir.”

“Ho! Boys lie all the time. And *steal*, — too. Steal! What about my swords?”

We both investigated geological formations in the bed of the quarry.

“Look straight at me.”

Four eyes were fixed upon him, and he seemed to like the experience; his own glance reminded me of the assumed ferocity which preceded a particularly liberal gratuity on some festal occasion of which my sire could not quite approve.

“Didn’t you think of your families, — of the people who cared for you and whom you would distress and almost kill by this folly?”

Kriemhild sobbed again. We were silent.

“Well, well, — you see. I must close the case, — and we’d best all go and get breakfast, — except you two. Now this foolish honour of yours, remember, is satisfied, and more. Understand? — Here, George Clayton. You’re an army man. I’m right, eh?”

I think my Uncle Charles winked at him.

“Quite right, Colonel Heigh, if you please.”

“Well! Now, you young scoundrels.... Tom, Tom, govern that unruly member! Take the boy home and horsewhip him, — only there’ll be nothing of *that* sort done, if I know anything about it; just now it’s the pair here and this ridiculous duel....”



“Duel!” groaned my father.

“Well, — what thee will. — Now, boys, on condition you do no more fighting — or stealing — and that you shake hands, yes, shake hands, and then go take your respective private floggings — eh, Perry? — for nearly killing us all with fright, and making my pretty Kriemhild here cry away her prettiness for fifteen full minutes. . . . Come here, my dear! Speak to these outcasts!”

She made just a step or two forward; but I noted the first glance that flashed toward us for just a second as it turned from Uncle Charles. It was not meant for me. Waltham Eliot was the man. She laid her hand on my good uncle’s shoulder and spoke to us with a steadier voice than one would have expected.

“Please shake hands,” she said. “I like you *both* so. . . . Please.”

“Excellent speech!” cried my Uncle Charles, now fairly smiling a kind of shorthand at old Perry, “and covers the whole ground.” He looked at my father, who ignored the tacit proposition to make a farce out of the affair, and yet offered no further interruption. His practical mind was revolving plans to ship Master Eliot back to Boston, along with the tentative figures of a great largess for Linsey Cards. Dighton Perry, who hated a fuss, telegraphed acceptance of the peace plan. Uncle Charles went on.



"Of course she likes you both.... Do you hear the lady, rascals? Shake hands! And will you agree to drop all this sputter and tomfoolery if I undertake — all right, Tom — that nothing serious shall come of the affair?"

"I do, sir."

"All right, Uncle Charles."

"Shake hands, then. So. — Amen. And a Quaker couldn't fight, Master Waltham Eliot, eh? Well, you see, he would, — the impudent young renegade. *I'll chastise him.* Shake hands again, boys. I like to see you do it.... Right! And now... Hallo, — what's *this*?"

It was a rude fall to an even lower farce. Breathless with joy and his run, sent by my placid mother who, among her roses, knew nothing but that sire and son were keeping back breakfast unduly long, came my little cousin Billy. In my room he had found the fishing-pole, which he now carried with one hand; the other held my testamentary card. "Oh, thanks, Johnny, — thanks!" he bubbled out. "Is it for next birthday?" — Even my father could not suppress a wan smile; the other men roared. "Nemesis already," cried Uncle Charles. He was in an unseemly cheerful mood; kept whispering and nodding to my father; and once actually poked Dighton Perry in the ribs.... "*Cherchez la femme,*" I think was what he whis-



pered. We were all in motion before my father could carry out certain stern intentions of segregation and reproof. — For me, I never knew common air to taste so sweet in the breathing of it; and even Waltham Eliot, now the strain was off, seemed to harbour no wrath against our recreant second who came to make his peace with us. “It was my duty to Mr. Heigh,” said Cards.

Waltham Eliot waved a general pardon. “If you thought it right, of course... *I* don’t look at things that way, no. But many a gentleman does. Yes, sir, you may believe me; you and I are good friends....” Cards was delighted. He shook hands with the nobleman; then turned to me with an expansive, cordial manner which nobody had ever marked in him before. My jocose mood prompted instead of handshake a feint or two of highly scientific boxing; Cards and Eliot thought it very witty and admirable indeed. Then the peacemaker turned for another cordial grasp to George Clayton of Virginia. But the cadet folded his arms and made a stiff bow. “I am glad there was no fight,” he said; “but I don’t like your way of acting second, sir.”

Yes, it was long ago, long ago, all that. It seems more recent and more of yesterday’s affair, however, than the other scene that I remember quite as well, though six years came and went



before a bigger fight cast that frustrated duel into the shade. A fine spring afternoon it was, I recollect, when the word went about that Kriemhild West and my friend were to be married within a month or so ; but I hardly heard the message, and heeded it even less. I was hurrying home, soon to stand, a great trembling lout, over my mother, who wept softly and looked at me through her tears, and kissed me, and wept again. Near by, my father, sometime man of peace, drummed on the window-ledge and said, yes, he was willing, — he was even half minded to go himself. Willing for what? Minded to go whither? — You see, the brief idyll had fled for good and all, fled with many a kind old heart that my boyhood had known and with many an old fashion of life that swiftly passed away ; for a second April's grass grew over my Uncle Charles, and the guns were roaring at Fort Sumter.







### III

## THE EPIC OF THE FOUNDING







## I

THROW some more of that wood upon the fire, Eliot. — We can sleep all the forenoon ; — *you* can. — It was the big hickory that stood in yonder field by the spring, you know ; sturdy old tree ; and every stick of it shall burn in the old house, for the old man, — and for you, my boy. It makes a brave light ; and I see you are watching how those crossed swords on the wall catch its ruddy flame. I wish I could *write* swords, young fellow, and put into this page all that the swords have to say to me when I sit here alone and smoke and gaze at them by the hour. I have made epics of them. And now the epic is upon us indeed ; the idyll is over and gone. An epic, I know, ought to roll with long hexameters like billows, ought to echo the quick-step of men hurrying into fight.

“ I fear epics are a lost art, Major.”

Doubtless. But I lived through one ; try to live it over with me. Look in this desk : old diaries, old letters, scraps of newspaper.... Let me deploy these dingy photographs. Look, too, at this ridiculous Colt's revolver ; it tells me of



battlefield, bivouac, long night-rides. — But have no fear, Eliot. You shall be delivered from the personally conducted narrative and the mock modesty of an “I” novel, and henceforward I shall sing very small indeed; the psalms of John, son of Thomas, are ended. But you must hear the tramp of the regiments again, as I can hear it, and feel the throb of our hearts, as we pressed hot upon that fiery column of patriotism which led us into the long struggle, and which we followed with such tumultuous hope. That is to say, three of us followed it; one did not.

Linsey Cards never told any one what my father had said to him in a colloquy which took place behind closed doors after that frustrated duel; it remained a mysterious thing; but when I came to settle the paternal estate, I found a memorandum for August, 1855, “to account of gratitude,” and the stub of a cheque for five hundred dollars in favour of “L. A. C.” Did Cards insist on a loan? Or was he with honest Bartholo of the play: *à la bonne heure, je le garde?* In any case he showed an affectionate reverence for my father which left nothing to be desired, and which took in the fulness of time sundry practical forms of service not to be forgotten by the house of Heigh. But the gratuity was pocketed; and what did he do with it? Aha! Did



I tell you how Waltham Eliot had talked with him of Harvard College? Well, one fine day in that fine September of '55, Linsey Cards, unconsidered but useful pawn in the commercial game of the great house headed by my maternal uncle, stood up boldly before his master and laid bare his intention to "get an education." This pawn, now discovered to have quite useful qualities, was minded to call for whatever privileges went with any piece in the game. At any rate, he left us for long years. My maternal uncle raged; my father was mildly disappointed; Kriemhild West paraded an aristocratic indifference; George Clayton, who had taken his own measure of Cards, thought he "belonged with the Yankees"; and my Uncle Charles opined that we were likely to have an open winter. My Uncle Charles, indeed, never took heartily to the founding; and only showed interest in his fate when we narrated the story of his strenuous year at the fitting-school down East and of his due matriculation at Harvard as classmate and friend of Waltham Eliot. — "Harvard, eh?" said my Uncle Charles; "and Eliot, too!" Then he quoted something about Cards and a *galère*, — whatever he meant. Among our neighbours there was considerable gossip over Cards until the panic of '57 gave us all something else to mind. People told how his only heirloom was an



ancient ambrotype, hard to see plainly, showing a snappy young woman in too candidly "best" clothes, and a young man, in gorgeous waistcoat, clinging gingerly to his hat, a fine-featured, ineffectual fellow with smooth face and wavy, poetic hair, as of George the Fourth turned virtuous and shy. And I, for my part, told how Cards used to blaze out now and then about his father's wrongs, — hidden fire that few had suspected. The world, he said, had kicked the loyal, hopeful enthusiast first up into an attic, then, more mercifully, down and out into his grave. Cards took, it seemed, the iron will from his mother, and from his father a play of imagination and an outlook for the possible which are so serviceable everywhere save in the paths of sentiment and on the barren ways of poetry; the simplicity, the trustfulness, the unschooled enthusiasm for ideals, — these the son buried with their victim six good feet under the sod. — And all these things we began to remember in the reticent, bashful boy when once reports of his astonishingly successful career reached us from Boston Bay.

Boston and Cambridge, indeed, were never to be persuaded that Cards had been in the remotest degree bashful or reticent in any respect save in the reticence of latent abilities. Friends of his in that college life divide it into two



periods, passing into a third at graduation: one, something cocky, clamorous, insistent, filled with a new sense of power, a new conviction of equality with all the world, and a pride of independence due to ample funds gradually accumulated by vacations spent in hard work under a Boston banker; the other, a period of portentous silences, unnecessary spaces between words, accompanied by an uncanny habit of fixing his gaze sternly on the interlocutor's face, and by a great intolerance of divergent opinion. He made huge successes in his college work, and superb failures, spurning whatever he deemed useless or obsolete. Of course he took the disease at that time so dreaded, and named with the harsh name of "infidelity"; the modern process of inoculation was not then common in the ranks of faith. He was aggressive in this article, a nuisance, as when at dinner in the Eliot mansion he remarked to a low-church Episcopalian guest that, sir, there are two logical positions, pope and sceptic, and anything, sir, between these two, any form of Protestantism, is but a wabbling and ineffectual futility. With his superfluous keenness of glance, and his habit of holding a brief silence before he answered questions, he was really a most formidable person for common social uses; and yet he fancied that his elaborate employment of titles, *sirs* to excess, and his deferential way of



picking one up in adverb after knocking one down with brutal substantive and verb, made him quite the easy gentleman. Occasionally a Philadelphian would return from Boston with some tale of this sort, and we could scarce believe our ears, remembering shy Linsey Cards. "Harvard College," my Uncle Charles was wont to say, as some fresh anecdote came south, "is indeed a great institution."

What saved Cards from the vulgar destiny of his breed? Well, that college itself, and the instinct in him for final best things; above all, his friend, Waltham Eliot. They exchanged favours of this sort, I think, on fairly equal terms. Cards, a big, keen, intolerant man of action, took delight in weeding out Eliot's bookish sayings, his mannerisms and poses, his preposterous assumption of the Brahminic perfection inherent in his tribe. Cards was a marked success in the college class, an athlete on occasion, a putter-through of wild schemes; there was no disgrace in being chum to "Roarer" Cards. Chums the two were, for good and ill; and they saw academic life together in all its phases save those of the positively vicious kind, hearing the Boston chimes at midnight, or, in half-rural flights, talking philosophy over a bowl of punch at Porter's tavern. Both achieved the distinction of a temporary separation from



scholastic privileges; each finished his course, notwithstanding this breach, high up in rank. By senior year Eliot had lost his dandified ways one and all, while Cards was emerging from his two periods aforesaid into that combined energy of character and reticence of speech which still stamps his life. Together they made a fine pair, equals; no longer Rollo and Jonas; like the heroes of the nursery rhyme, they were indeed two pretty men. Once, late in the senior year, the two came our way, Eliot, of course, to Miss Patty's at Roadside,—for the engagement was announced,—and Cards as guest of the Heighs. My father was at last justified of his foundling; “a fine young man,” he said, looking at me in the old suggestive way, “a fine promising man of business.” — “And what about Eliot?” quoth I. — “Oh,—Waltham Eliot. Why,—very well; very well.” My father had many of the ancient Quaker ways. So had I.

As they clutched their precious sheepskins at Commencement, and bowed their heads a moment for the last word of the nursing mother before they went out as her favourite sons into the world, the keen imaginative eye of Cards saw a straight, steep path before him, leading to financial and commercial honours such as the country as yet had never known; he saw noth-



ing else, and he knew that he could reach his goal. Eliot's gaze flitted over a more diversified landscape; though the path was plain enough, it was crossed by pleasance-walks for the holiday, dotted with resting-places and prospects; and under the shade of its trees and shrubbery he was to wander not alone. He saw, to be more explicit, a dignified young man winning golden opinions and fees at the Suffolk County bar; a house on Beacon Street, not too remote from the ripples of Frog Pond, and ruled by the most charming hostess in Boston; meetings of directors at bank or mill-office; and in the dim, purple distance, say of a quarter-century, this very Commencement scene, with himself as governor, taking his doctorate with an easy grace, while a younger Waltham harangued his duly attentive audience with that *oratio summa cum laude* which the sire had neglected to achieve.... These things the ardent youths saw in the folds of their diplomas; and these things, as matter of actual life, they began to approach in most auspicious fashion, one in the Boston banking-house as confidential clerk and trusted agent for large affairs, the other in a great solicitor's law-office as capable student, when, on a fine day of April, 1861, the dreams and the activities being at their cleverest, a sudden cloud of dust and powder-smoke shut



out the whole future from view and stopped all work of the present: in his snug little private room now reeking with wildest patriotism, amid his neglected law-books, sat Waltham Eliot talking battle, murder, and sudden death with Linsey Cards. Just as if a liberal education went for nothing at all, here was Eliot, quite boy again, sure that it would have to be "swords," and here was Cards, as of the quarry, standing for compromise. At the same time, you remember, I was upon my own business, parting from mother and sire; George Clayton was marching, with whatever wry face at the prospect of fighting fellow-Virginians, in his company of regulars under orders from old Scott.... Blow, trumpets of war, and thunder, O ye cannon of battle; the epic at last begins! — I said one of us did not go to the war. It was ... but listen to these two in eager dialogue.

"Settled? Compromise?" — Master Eliot's voice vibrates with scorn. "Why, — hear those regiments marching off!" — One could indeed catch the sound of distant drum and fife; now and then the tramp of feet.

"March them back again," says Cards, heavily, "and save their fools' skins."

"Fools, eh? Do you know that your esteemed



friend, your worthy arch and patron, Thomas Heigh, Heigh the elder, is reported to have been on the verge of enlistment?"

"Nonsense."

"Anyway, he sent off John with his blessing. John a fool, eh?"

"You say it. And to be killed for the politicians, — nice way to treat one's friends. I urge mine to stay at home and play the man."

"Play the man!"

"Yes. — Does?...?...?" — Cards let his enigmatic words find elucidation in the glance directed to a portrait prominent on Eliot's desk.

"Precisely. She does indeed." — The thing was inevitable at three-and-twenty, and Eliot proudly quoted *On Going to the Wars....*

"I salute Colonel Lovelace!"

"Underline *Colonel*, then, — and thanks. There was another Lovelace, with another address in the directory. He didn't go to the wars."

"Poetry — rhetoric — excitement; all as usual, Waltham. Cool off, as you always do; and come to reason, as you generally do."

"I come to reason when there is any reason to come to. And there is none about *your* person to-day, Roarer. Be sure of that."

"I suppose you would persuade me, then, to come over to your folly. — We are friends, I



believe; and generally go together, however we talk ourselves apart in argument."

Eliot stared at the man. If such a word as "agitated" could by any possibility be made to rhyme with Linsey Cards, it was now.

"What are you nervous about, Lin? You can hardly fill your pipe."

"I can't, eh?" Cards set his teeth, and achieved the operation in dispute about six inches from Eliot's nose; it was a characteristic performance. "Talk to the question," he said imperiously, with an attempt at his curt, severe style, not quite successful.

"Of course." Eliot smiled at his friend, who reddened a little under the smile; he was detected in the act of sentimental weakness, and felt somewhat as the travelling salesman felt whom I once saw in a smoking-car when a bachelor comrade pulled from its hiding-place a little toy wheelbarrow in broken paper wrappings; caught in sheer domesticity, this fellow of infinite sooty jest, this connoisseur of women who travel alone, growled out an oath. "Drop it, will you?" he said. "It's for that —— little boy of mine." So it went now with sagacious, hard-headed Cards; he was caught in sentiment, and what might not come after?—in Heaven's name, not this absurd patriotism which had set the whole North crazy!



"The question, if you like," said Eliot, "is whether I am right to enlist. Your action is not bound up in mine, however good friends we may be. Religion, love, war, are all individual matters, Lin. And you must admit, this *is* war?"

Questions of fact were sacred with L. A. Cards. "Yes," he said, "it's war. You've chucked the fat into the fire. I wish you had to collect all Boston's income for this year and the next in the shape of southern due-bills. — By the way; did you buy cotton, as I told you? No? — Well, *I* did." — Cards smiled grimly. — "Patriots, are you? Well, you are sending New England's prosperity up a very tall tree."

"Lin, you are hardening your heart. This commercial talk is bluff. You want me to exorcise the devil of trade, and I do it. Linsey Cards, I bid thee to enlist!"

"I'll be hanged if I do, — or shot." The man spoke with a strange indefiniteness, as if the humorous tone of his friend precluded a serious reply. And he was evidently bent upon being serious. Suddenly he came up close to Eliot, big, towering over the sitter.

"You are going to enlist?"

"No doubt of it."

"Well... Shall I? I mean *really*."



Eliot jumped to his feet. They two stood at close gaze for a good minute; and then Eliot spoke slowly and kindly.

"I didn't expect such a surr...such a question. How can *I* answer, when you put it that way? Hang it, this is like religion,—it's uncanny. *I* can't tell you what you ought to do, Lin."

"Confound what I *ought* to do! I know well enough what I ought to do. I ought to mind my business,—in every sense of the word." He relented at the look in the eye of his friend, at the sympathetic shaking of head. "See here. Sink argument. See here.... It's not ought or might or should or would with me. It's what *you* wish. Don't interrupt. If any man calls me a foundling, a nobody, you know I'm ready to knock his teeth down his throat. And you also know that it's true. Well. Think what I was out there in Philadelphia (I'll go there one of these days and make a mark so big you can see it from here!)—think what I am now. You did it. You did it. You have always treated me on the level. I want to stay there, though you sink it now to worse than anything I ever was. You brought me up to heaven. Now you're bound...for the other place. A poor excursion, yes; but I'll not desert. The logic is nothing. You're a fool to go, a fool;



it's all bargaining over a dead horse, and no war was ever so silly, so useless. But I don't back down. I have precisely one friend in the world. Does that friend ask me to go with him?"

"Yes and no."

"Come, come!"

"You know what I mean. Yes, if you think it your duty. If you only enlist because I do, no."

"Tough!"

"Sense! Do you feel it to be your duty?"

Cards walked to the window, came back, looked hard at Eliot, and said slowly: "No, sir. No. I do not." Then he went back to the window. Presently he laughed aloud. "Write a novel about us. *Yardstick and Sword* will do; or *The Count and the Discount*. — Opening chapter. — 'Two boys are playing together, — playing stick-knife. One, an ignoble, plebeian, but sturdy little brat, with teeth actually in the earth, is drawing from its place a stick driven in deep by his fair-haired, blue-eyed aristocratic playmate. "Nothing," cries the latter, "*nothing could make me do that, Higgins.*" — And "*Ah,*" replies the other, touching his cap in spite of the recumbent posture, "*Ah, Reginald de Courcy, it would be, indeed, impossible for you. . . .*"' In the sequel, Reginald dies saving the life of a thieving drunkard, — and Higgins keeps the knife. . . . Don't shake your head so much. It's turned enough now."



“Lin, Lin! — Come, give me your honest view of the situation. You have reasons for not enlisting; and I shall respect them, just as I respected your doings at the old quarry. You don’t rhyme with *fear*, Lin; I know that. In fact, in the temper now abroad, it asks less courage to go to the front than to stay at home. I go, not for the shouting, but for my good reasons. What are yours for staying?”

“Plain ones. I admit a heap of political rubbish in the house. Wheel it off and burn it, I say; you say, set fire to the house. Hang it all, Eliot, what are you going to fight about? To free the slaves, — that is what it will come to; little as you think it, you are playing into the hands of a few abolitionists. Waltham, my boy, put up five men, North here, like you, and five Southerners of the same stamp: I tell you, the whole mess of niggers from Virginia to Florida won’t weigh down you ten men! Let...”

— “Major!”

“Eh? — I thought you nigh asleep.”

“Not at all. But wasn’t Friend Cards pretty nearly right?”

“Are you a democrat, after all? A rank copperhead?”

“Oh, I don’t mean about the fighting. I’ll be wrong there with Plato, and my uncle, — who,



by the way, is getting worth while — and you, rather than be right with Cards. — But he *was* right about the negroes. And pardon my interruption! — ”

Let me see, then. Oh! Well, Cards is talking, isn't he? Well, he went on to show that it was a nasty situation for the North; but self-control would pay. “Let the other states secede; Virginia will stay with us. We'll develop the West, build up our factories, and, on the quiet, get ready for war if it has to come at last. The South can't do without us; they'll be sick, and we shall be sound, within these five years, — and they'll all come back to be spanked and forgiven! Now, though! Where's our army? Where are the best generals? All South. Temporize, as wise men have to do. Our arms are our mills, our railroads, our wheat and corn out West. Put up the rotten muskets, and keep the ploughs going. We are growing that way, and one of these days we shall be feeding half Europe. Our campaign is patience....”

“Too late,” interrupted Eliot. “How can the North help fighting now?”

Cards climbed out of his oratorical car, ruefully enough; he saw his friend was flint.

“Help fighting? I suppose not. I suppose our talk is academic, after all. Let's see.” He took up an *Advertiser*. “Loan of 1881,” he



muttered as his trained eye ran down the financial column; "ah, the six per cents. Yes. Dropped to 84 $\frac{5}{8}$ . Yes, the war is on. Whose war? Don't you know how to succeed in business? Back your own opinion when the crowd goes wrong. It's not your war."

"I don't say its *yours*. And I respect your motives. Hang it all, boy, — do justice to the justice I do you!"

"Well, thanks for that. I might as well tell you there is a nigger in my woodpile to match your blameless Ethiopian on the battlefield. Here. I've a letter from Olcott in New York, — and you know Olcott was the brains of our house. He's cut loose now, and scents the big game, going to Europe as 'fiscal agent,' loan-maker, buyer of supplies, Heaven knows what not and where not, but assuredly where the good money is flying. He's the Man in Macedonia the Bible talks about, and he calls to me to come over and help him. I..."

"Oh! Fine! Just the thing for..."

"Let me finish. He can't talk German; and I can, — thanks to that little shoemaker of my youth. Germany is our place for arms and loans."

Eliot sprang again to his feet from the professional arm-chair. Cards forced him back.

"Sit there. Now. Say the word I want to



hear, my boy. Say that one word, Waltham, and this letter flies to the deuce, and you and I go soldiering together. Together. Now. *Ask me to go.*"

Eliot smiled up at the eager eyes above him and once more shook his head.

"You are bed-rock to-day, youngster. Did you learn the trick from me?"

"Be rock yourself, as always, — this time gold-bearing quartz. Go with Olcutt. You can do more over there in a day for the good cause than I and a dozen like me can do in a year. Saul will slay his — man perhaps, and David his tens of thousands. David, go in. It's a clear case."

"What regiment, — yours?"

Eliot named it and added a confidence; he was to be a second-lieutenant in his company. "I have fooled a little, you know, with soldiering and drill."

"Clayton?"

"Off with his regulars. Poor chap! He promised his father, dead these four years and an old-line Whig, that he'd stay by the Union; but his whole kin will be in the other army. Besides..."

"Well?"

"Between us, my engagement hits him hard. — Poor old chap!"

"John Heigh another victim?"



“Oh, — hardly. No, no. Boy and girl.... But we'll change the subject. The army is not made up of disappointed lovers, nor are the ranks of finance. Eh, Lin?”

Cards made no answer. He sat down; and they both smoked in silence. A small squad of soldiers, with drum and fife, marched past the open window....

“And you won't ask me to go with you?”

“Stuff, Lin. Do your duty as you see it.”

“So I will.” Cards knocked out his pipe on the coals of a dying fire, straightened himself, and then reached for his hat. The quick rattle of the war-music echoed into silence. “So I will,” he said again. “Good-bye, Eliot. I shall see you to-night at dinner.”



## II

WHEN those three fishers went sailing out into the west, oblivious of the signs of storm noted by the three wives, there was doubtless one other fisher at least who made his boat snug and walked quietly home to weed his garden. In any case, I know that three fools went to the war, and one wise man listened to his own wisdom. Fools we were, but a glorious kind of fool; and if I had the skill, I could talk of Red-Cross Knights and Satyrans and Guyons and the rest, although, were Spenser to tell the tale of us now, I think his allegory would try for local colour and paint one Bellona and her friend Pallida Mors at a bargain-counter marked by this sign: "Fools in Assorted Sizes." Such a sign hung along our coast, in those early days, from Maine to Florida. For then, you see, it was worth while to play the fool, since at the start we waged a fool's war; later came the politicians, the contractors, and took it up; and ghosts of men slain in useless battles, mothers with red eyes, too, stalked through our dreams. The dirty fortunes made by politics and knavery



in sweet conjunction did not mend matters for us, as we wore out our shoddy coats and trod through our paper-soled shoes, and looked northward, from those familiar Virginia fields stained with the blood of comrades, at patriots of the lobby and the mill. But the first of it, boy, the first of it was the best, when high-hearted youngsters, resolute men, rejuvenated veterans, all left mother, wife, sweetheart, children, waved a hardy farewell, tumbled into awkward ranks, and marched quickstep to Bull Run.

“Bravo, Major! That’s epic for a fact!”

Well, make what you can of it. You’ll get no battlefields. What little I remember of the close fighting I am trying hard to forget, — indeed I am. General Slasher, now in Congress, will be glad to see you any night at the club, and will outwatch the bear, and outdo the boar, and make you miss the train, with his anecdotes now of serious and now of comic hue. That depends on what you drink. You will roar over the dish of crow served as fricasseed chicken; you will hold your breath as the general and his brave boys sweep up the hill and take the battery; you will weep noble tears over Andersonville and the dead-line and the poor fellows that rolled out for the blessing of a quick bullet.... And you will, of course, vote for General Slasher and his record, unvaried by any other legislative efforts,



of bills for the highest possible tariff and for pensions all around. I give no tales of battle; and I ask no votes. It hurts me to say much about those days; like little Peterkin, I begin to wonder what it was all about, and why so many fine fellows had to die that General Slasher might dispense his country's charity with such magnificence. But I will tell, because I must, the simple story of Eliot and Clayton and myself,—and of Cards. Somehow, it has a constant refrain like the nursery song, this tale of mine, and speak of whom it will, returns always to one theme—*this is the house that Cards built*. As I figure the matter, that is, after all, why we went to war....

Oh, but he was a soldier through and through, your Uncle Waltham! Read the *Rebellion Record* yonder. Read the history of his famous regiment. The root of the matter was in him, verily; and as soon as guns began to bark, and pickets came driven in, and louts like me undertook simply to shove themselves into the obvious place and do obvious things, this Harvard sport kept a cool head over his hot heart, watched the game while he fought, anticipated, dared, refused,—you know the kind. After Bull Run they made him major in one of the new Massachusetts regiments. He had the drilling of it, and took it at last to the front; and



enjoyed a bit of fun withal, so the family records will show you, as he passed through Philadelphia southward. There was a rude shack down Broad Street in those days, close to the old Baltimore station, where our women used to feed the soldiers; every regiment stopped there for a meal cooked by the cleverest matrons and served by the comeliest maidens of our city. It was better than picking lint, the girls were wont to say. Eliot's regiment took the place of another at the last moment, and so he had no time to arrange for a tender meeting. But there was a surprise. The tale has been told me by Abner R. Slocum, then a raw private, from South Framingham. Major Eliot was very busy; he had disposed of his men, and the luncheon was in full progress; now, standing close to Abner and watching the soldiers, hundreds feeding like one, he was startled to hear a "Gosh!" of plain amazement from the sagacious but reticent Yankee. Abner, with suspended sandwich, was looking with wide eyes toward a near corner of the corridor where the company had stacked its arms. Heedless of a pacing sentry, some young woman — Abner called her "all-fired handsome" — had approached, picked up a musket, weighed it, sighed, smiled, and at last took simulated aim at a rebel. The major, alarmed by Abner's mighty oath, and following Abner's gaze, saw



dimly this proceeding and rushed out in wrath. "Silly children!" he muttered; and then aloud: "I beg pardon, — but..." The young person turned swiftly around. "Salute properly your superior officer!" she cried. "Aha!" shouted the transformed major, — "that I will." — Those were not days of intricate social ceremony or of misplaced shyness; nobody, save Abner, was looking; and there sounded out as noble a kiss as ever marked the concussion of chivalry and beauty. "Gosh!" remarked once more the man from South Framingham.

An hour more, and the train bore away that regiment to Virginia; you know its history, — always at the front, always first in attack, always covering the sullen retreat! But in fact we were all at the front now, all in Virginia; and we lingered there a long while, with Maryland and, at last, Pennsylvania, for occasional change of scene, — Eliot, Clayton, and I. What we were doing, as I have already told you, you can read in the chronicles and in the recollections and in the tremendous historical novel. But Cards, who had always cherished an idea of improving his mind by foreign travel, and who, as you know, had a House to found, went off to Germany; wisdom, in his case, is justified of her children, as she is of the poet who told us long ago that "sundry schools make subtle clerks."



From the Chronicles of the House, to be published, I hope, one of these days, I venture to take a little chapter which may go under the title of the Battle of Windenbad. Peace hath her victories, and this was one of them — for Cards. Whenever I look over yonder at the great house itself, the house in stone, and think of the master of it, — his word enough to set millions jumping about in all the banks of the world, — then I feel, how insignificant were our own poor doings, our blundering marches and countermarches, our silly battles and slaughters, down on the peninsula and about the James. What a pitiful business we made of it, to be sure! At Antietam we just managed to save our little skins, and the great Union skin in the bargain. . . . At the club, once or twice, I have noted this fact in connection with our subsequent national career, and have insisted that it was after all a fast-shrinking *peau de chagrin* that we saved; and General Slasher confides in a hoarse whisper that Heigh's daffy — "daffy as a coot." . . . No, these were not victories. It was Cards who fought with unbroken triumph; and I am to tell you now of his battle of Windenbad.

Negotiating loans, buying military supplies, dickering and dining, dining and dickering, and always smoking those pet, fat, black cigars, the excellent Olcutt, as one no longer blessed with



the bloom of youth, went wrong in his stomach. He laid his distress to the smell of German cabbages. It took, in his physician's view, a pleasingly miscellaneous form of gout; and the leeches indicated a prolonged cure at this romantic watering-place which I call, for fear of detection, Windenbad. Here he drank the accursed waters, and swore freely, as was his wont, while Cards did all the work. Cards did it with silent and almost uncanny perfection. One day he came back to the baths with certain large things sweepingly accomplished. Olcutt forgot to swear. "Well done," he said; and then, being a judge of faces, discovered something he had not seen before in his respected understudy. There was the same square jaw; the black moustache drooped as always over a straight mouth; the eyes were as keen as ever, — but all with a difference.

"Cards, I wish I had your command of this lingo. I wish I had your digestion. And I begin to wish I had your... Well. Business, eh? To-morrow you're going..."

"Pardon me..."

"Eh?"

Financial eyeglasses, whose deliberate adjustment had been wont to set clerks in a shiver, now only served to bring out more clearly the jaw, the mouth, the eyes, — and the something more. — "Eh?"



"I think I shall go back to America. You can easily fill my place. Any clerk, you know...."

"Clerk! Oh, come!"

"Dent is in Berlin now. Dent is a very steady, good man."

Olcutt exploded, cursing Dent heartily, and adding quite irreverent remarks about his own stomach and the general economy of nature, as a wave of distress assailed him. Cards, after a respectful pause, went on.

"These defeats, sir. I am a strong man and young; men like me are needed at the front. My friends are there,—if they're not killed. And so..."

"Look here!" Olcutt made an energetic change of posture, followed by great dolour in his visage, and a complicated oath. "I'd trade my digestion for a rebel cotton-bond," he said, putting the remark as a personal and valuable confidence to Cards. Then he whistled a weird, dissolute tune between his teeth, looked over the pretty hills, looked back at Cards, and began to speak in fragments of no open coherence, but plain in the underlying drift of thought.

"Enlist? You?—Rubbish!... But how can I?—Something,—yes.... Yes, of course. I always meant,—ultimately, you know; ultimately."—The word had a soothing effect.



“Ultimately, of course. No, Cards, there *isn't* much in it now for you. — Well, you must come into the game.”

“Mr. Olcutt, you are wrong, sir, if you think...”

Olcutt stared; then pulled himself together. He remembered that Cards never trusted in what we have since learned to call “bluff”; and he rose to the level of a serious conversation.

“No, Cards, I don't think *that*, — now. I know what you mean. You have letters from home, as I have; and you remember, as I do, that you are an American of the North with a heart and a soul in you. That's all right. You have a letter, I suppose, from that fine young friend of yours, with the pretty *fiancée*, — Eliot, Eliot. Yes. And you are cut up. But see here. You settled all that a year ago; and you settled it wisely. The situation is acute; but no premises have changed; and while I respect your patriotism, I tell you plainly that what really cuts you up is your sense of responsibility and work out here without authority ... and profit. Spades are trumps, Cards; let's not talk about hearts. And I call the spade by its name. You are sore about all this work; and you show your sense. Look at me, — though, by the lord Harry, young chap, you've been doing nothing else for half an hour. Not as handsome as I used to be,



eh? — Cards, I'll make it halves on the personal end!"

Cards smoked fast.

"It's all square," Olcutt went on, "square as such things ever are. The government isn't compromised, and doesn't lose. Oh, it's square."

The two men smiled a little, wan, twin smile.

"But we are just where the gentle rain falls from heaven by night, and the sweet sun shines by day, and we may as well put out our dashed little flower-pots. You haven't any flower-pots, — to speak of. Take half of mine; and tend 'em all. That's my offer, Cards. Put up or draw out. I'm a sick man and can't dicker by the hour as I could once. Take five minutes, — or two; and say your *Yes* loud."

As Cards had come out upon the pleasant piazza of their hotel, he had passed a well-known picture in one of the rooms; it showed the women of Prussia bringing their gold wedding-rings for the war of liberation and taking rings of iron instead; a boy, too, was reciting to his invalid father, an officer, *Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?* And now, of all things in the world, the band of the place, mindful of Olcutt's tremendous tips, was doing him honour by playing what it conceived to be our American national hymn. Cards glanced from the *Kursaal* and the band out over the pine-covered Thuringian hills; a



red sun was sinking westward. And the band still crashed out its rude but effective tune of occidental patriotism. — I think this was a very critical moment for the House of Cards. Olcott thought something of the sort, too, and narrowly watched his man.

“There are fools and fools, Cards. The biggest fool I know is the one who mixes business and sentiment. Don’t mind the music. Think it’s *Money Musk*, — and look at something solider than a sunset. — Take the worst of it. — Any of your friends killed yet?”

“Eliot had a very close shave.”

“Ah. Saving your friendship, there’s one of the grand sentimental fellows; he’ll go down some fine day, waving his sword, falling in front of the line, bullet through *her* photograph into his heart. No, hear me out. You’ll be sorry for him. So shall I, in my way. Harvard College will shiver — and there will be a pretty woman for somebody to console. Brutal, I know; but what is all that for? Why, for this infernal nonsense of a war (whisper it, of course) that fifty men like you and me, with any luck, could have averted! Shall we, too, go blind with sentiment? Hadn’t we better stay above ground and set things to rights when we can? Look at *that* side. — Ah, another tune! Bravo, band! What is it? And what is your word?”



The band was indeed now playing something about love and wine, a flattering thing; Cards knew that tune all the rest of his life, but never found out the name. — An Englishman, evidently on his wedding tour, and his handsome young wife, came glowing in from a sharp walk in the woods.... The garden was filling up with people, and waiters began to bustle about, arranging tables in the soft air under the trees. "I've ordered," said Olcutt, irrelevantly, "the very finest trout for supper that you ever saw; got 'em out of the little basin by the brook back there. Good scheme, isn't it? And a bit of venison. Choose your own wine.... Come, Cards, time's long since up. How is it?"

"Done," said Cards.

He had won his battle. Olcutt, curiously enough, always claimed it as *his* victory; "but, by Jove, sir, for a dozen seconds, I thought it was lost!"



### III

AND now the fates, urged, shall we say, by Bellona and by Mercury, picked out these two men, marked them, and forced them to the front of things in earnest. When we discussed not generals, to be sure, but capable and rising officers, Eliot's name was on our lips first as well as last; when financial authorities in and out of government talked over the chances of the day, it was seldom that the phenomenal young worker over there in Germany did not come to the fore of conversation and the focus of favourable prophecy. They were not in the papers, in the public eye, as yet; but they were marked men for those inner councils of the military and the financial world. Each of them was patriot and true sportsman to the core, standing manfully to the game, whatever odds rose against him. And high enough did the odds rise with the crisis, with Gettysburg, — so much bewritten, I begin to doubt that it was ever fought; and lo, both of these my heroes plunged with equal desperation into the campaign, one with his sword and



his last pound of energy and skill, the other with his last rag of credit. And they won.

Supreme moments of experience are rarely remembered in themselves, but rather in their concomitants and results. When I think of Gettysburg impersonally, and that is never in times of the east wind, it is not the roar of cannon that I hear and the sweep of Pickett's men up that long slope that I can see, but it is the groans of wounded men for my dull old ears and the faces of the slain for my memorial sight, the reeking field, and the moan of loss that went up over all the land, — that is my Gettysburg. What sacrifices for our ideal! And how near that same ideal to disaster and extinction! A sundered nation, a divided people; impotent conclusion for South as well as North! Here and there a scholar, bending over his Horace, and old enough or far enough away to feel a certain detachment of patriotism which could cover the larger issue, sighed to think of Europe in a grim delight at occidental troubles and waiting for the final crash, the *Hesperiae sonitum ruinae*.... We nursed our wounded and we buried our dead, and then went back, when we could, to our business at home or on the picket-lines. Cards missed all that, though he loves to speak of Gettysburg. "Look at it," he says, "merely as a business proposition, — what a sweep it



was! It saved the Union; it baffled that fox of a third Napoleon; it kept England neutral; it reëlected Lincoln; it..."

Here I fall into Cards's eloquence with some of my own. "It made Waltham Eliot colonel of regulars, and it gained you, Cards, first and last, a cool million.... O well for Gettysburg indeed! Leeze me on Gettysburg; let me have a siller tassie and a pint of wine, son of the Lindsays, to pledge that day! But for Gettysburg, where we fought and bled, there would be no House of Cards; worse yet, Elbert-Kelley would have no castle, no hyphen; and his venerated grandsire, founder of the line, would have gone to his grave under a pile of unsold and unsalable army-blankets. O well for Gettysburg!" People wonder why Cards, when I say this, only shrugs his shoulders and grins, instead of pitching me out of his house. If the question is put to him, he tells how I lost half my promotion after the battle for speaking my mind plain and clear to a state politician. "Let old John growl," says Cards; "he has no enemy but himself."

Probably I do growl a bit too much; and certainly I have put more gloom into the last pages than I ought to have done. It is the retrospect, I suppose, through foul vapours of reconstruction; in point of fact, those long weeks that followed



the battle, when Clayton and Eliot and I were on furlough and free to breathe the sharp air of the hills, made as happy a time, for at least two of us, as we had ever known. Let me recover the mood.

They told me Lee was retreating over the Potomac with his wonted skill, and our army was lumbering after him in the dear old way; they whispered, nodded, shook the head, as I asked for comrade after comrade; I must go to sleep again, they insisted, lie quiet and take the little dose. "Eliot?" I replied.

"Look over there, then, if you must." I was propped up a moment by pillows; following the gesture, I saw him across the room, a smile flickering over his white face. "Remember the quarry?" he called feebly; and as feebly, but with the inveterate jocosity of us Heighs, I sent back something about the arrival of our families too late to stop the fight. "Cards wasn't here," I said. I just heard that "Old Linsey is all right," and then, from another voice, that the point now was to make Waltham and John, dear boys, all right, — when I lost my line of communication with reality. Surgeons bothered with me; and surgery in those days was rough. But we had the best of care, for our kin had gathered about us; barring the lack of room, which made it necessary for Eliot and me to lie in the same chamber, we



were comfortably housed. All about us, however, in barns and sheds and rudely improvised field-hospitals, lay our poor privates, row on row, dying of wounds, of fever, of the pitiless heat. We were not privates. Nathan West, grandsire of Kriemhild, — her father and mother had died long before, — fine old boy, and Philadelphia merchant of the race now extinct, nodded his kindly head and told my parents that he would give bonds for my appearance safe and sound in two months, if he could have his will with me as with Eliot. On the southern slopes of the Blue Ridge, a day's journey from Gettysburg, was a great mansion, with its sufficient acres, which he had long ago inherited from kinsfolk of the South. There in the fresh mountain air, safe within the new Union lines, those young men whom he was romantic enough to call his "heroes," — Eliot, soon to count as his grandson, Clayton his great-nephew, and one John Heigh, son of his old friend and neighbour, — should be his happy guests, his patients, and should march at quickstep under his lead into the very citadel of impregnable health. My parents consented; as soon as Eliot and I could totter a few paces from our beds, we were haled off to paradise.

Our army was once again in its ancient haunts, fronted, as of old, by its unassailable and vigilant foe. But the North was safe. Vicksburg had



fallen ; and everywhere rose talk of a grim, silent general who did things while others were discussing and planning and excusing. Hope was in the air. England drew back from that impending recognition ; our navy tightened its long chain about the coast ; the disintegration of Union authority was checked with the last of the draft riots ; and our own individual reclaiming of life, with vanished fever and closing wounds, seemed a type of the larger cheer. Hilarity of convalescence has no equal ; we were soon jesting and smiling over the old place like Germans at a picnic, — all except George Clayton.

It was bandied about in the army that Clayton, for a dozen battles, had been trying to be killed ; and all that came of his uncanny efforts was this trifling scratch at Gettysburg. In my opinion, few men seek their bullet ; recklessness is another affair, and it is sure that Clayton was reckless. The reason, accepted on all sides, was his unrequited love for cousin Kriemhild ; but, then, they never yarned about *my* pursuit of dissolution, and why make such a charge against the Virginian ? Nathan West would not hear of it. “Stuff,” he said tersely. “George was never a ladies’ man. Let him alone.” Of course we let him alone. But there were quieting symptoms ; for instance, this. One day, when we had begun to go about, Clayton



most nimbly of the three, old West broke upon our full group with news from the North. A friend in Washington wrote that the collapse of the confederacy was really imminent; and by the way, two friends—ahem!—on the spot commissioned him to announce the wedding of his granddaughter and Colonel Eliot in this very place one month or less from date. We set up shouts of joy; but I could see Clayton's cheek go pale as death. Then I joined the believers; and I know of a truth that men can be hard hit. I had recovered, yes; but this Virginian had a more sensitive system. We Heighs are a thick-skinned breed, and I have heard that the Withers, an English family, are connected with us. It was George of that ilk who made certain lines, excellent good in my humble judgment, about the rejected lover's right attitude. And there is another ditty, something more blunt, but in that view, by Sir John Suckling, which I also subscribe. Clayton, however, could not say amen to any chant of "the devil take her." It was rather devil take *him*; a poor compromise, I am sure. At any rate, he was hard hit; and his amorous wound would not heal. A second time, too, I noted his trouble, in this case exacerbated by an infusion of Cards; you know that always, like my poor uncle, he balked at any idea of comradeship with excellent Linsey. It



was a week or so after the marriage had been announced; physical health was pouring into us like a Fundy tide, little as we were yet fit for service; we sat upon the great columned piazza, with a lawn before us and noble trees, chatting over our mail. The sun was low. Latter August was come; and for me there is no season that can peer it on the cool uplands, when days sing "summer" and nights murmur "winter," and those jolly little tenants of grass and leaf strike up the great farewell concert of their lives.

"Fancy!" It was Eliot who cried out the word, with something of that old exotic quality.

"Fancy!" He slapped a letter on his knee.

"What?"

"Or whom?"

"This — and him. Linsey Cards, — old Roarer, by Jove! Just arrived in New York. Now, Mr. West..."

"Certainly, Waltham. He shall join the Boston party. Or better, now, now. Eh? Write him to come through at once. Wire him! No? — Of course, of course. Well, I'll write him myself."

"Thank you, sir, heartily. — Listen, all of you. Here is his news. 'The feeling in Germany, where they judge things without prejudice,' — Lin is keen, sir, you know, very keen; you may trust old Cards, — 'is that the South is



doomed. Here in New York I find the financial people quite as sanguine; it seems to be no fairy-tale, but the war is near its end. This may not suit ambitious army officers, but it will suit their friends. May I soon dance at your wedding, and — why not? — salute you at the same time as military governor of Virginia, — conquered, submissive Virginia!’ How that sounds! ‘Conquered, submissive Virginia! And will you hang Davis to that apple tree of the lyric, governor? Or will you exercise your clemency? Will Mrs....’ and a lot more nonsense! But fancy it all! And he *shall* dance at our wedding.”

“That he shall,” echoed grandfather Nathan, a sound Philadelphian of the old rock, the kind that live to be ninety and have cheeks like a fresh apple. “And we’ll bag this millionaire at once. — George, when does the mail leave Orchardville?”

Clayton started. He had been staring out over the lawn. “I beg pardon, sir. Orchardville? Oh, — the mail. I will see.” He rose and went into the house, all of us noting his haggard look. — “Poor fellow,” murmured Eliot to Kriemhild. And Kriemhild, most irrelevantly, turned to me with a wish that everybody could be sensible and nice and cheerful like John here.

“Thanks,” I said grimly.



"I shall see you married safely to Dolly West," she went on. Dolly West is her cousin, Horace's daughter.

"Thanks again. And to whom will you marry Linsey Cards?" I spoke it in my loud, harsh Pennsylvania drawl.

"Ho, ho!" laughed old West. "There's a countess or a baroness in the wood, I'll be bound. A German baroness."

"He's welcome, I'm sure," said Kriemhild, in *her* Philadelphia manner, the manner in which she still asks '*Who are they?*' with suspended lorgnette, at the opera or the horse-show. "So is the baroness. But you're booked for Dolly, John; and don't pretend to struggle!"

"Will none of you Philadelphians ever be quite fair to old Linsey?" Waltham Eliot was more than half in earnest. "It's the missing background." Just then Clayton appeared with his information, gave it quietly, and went into the house again. We chatted on awhile, but not quite so gaily as before; chill had come with the twilight; and at last we, too, went indoors. I pitied myself a little, as I stood alone in my room. But, as I thought things over, I pitied Clayton more. What really ailed him? Could I cheer him up?



## IV

HE was handsome in the southern way, tall, slender, sallow, with dark eyes; punctilious in manner; pious in the Presbyterian faith, and not too tolerant; a great reader of books; lonely. He was a whig and union man by inheritance; his widowed mother, dying a few years before the war, had confirmed these principles of the father in the son and solemnly handed them down as the trust of the house. In 1860 he was careful to explain that "union" with him spelled neither republican nor abolitionist; since 1860 he "had no politics." Common belief asserted that his politics were now centred in his fair cousin. He was not precisely coddled in the army; like his great fellow-Virginian, General George H. Thomas, he got not the half of his deserts, not the tithe... By...

"What *is* the matter, Major?" — I was walking up and down, the manuscript in my hands.

"My hobby, that's all," I retorted sharply; "can't you see the poor thing I am striding? Oh, how they treated Thomas! Why... Yes, yes. I know. It's all over." — I sat down again, and read.



Fight as well as he could, and Clayton was a fine officer, he was kept under, watched, harried, shifted about; you know how it was.... Banks "the Bobbin Boy," and Butler the Yankee lawyer, were our military jewels.... Luck, in a word, was always against poor Clayton. Neither laggard in love nor dastard in war, he was baffled in both. Poor devil of a brave, kindly, serious southern gentleman, doing his noble best under the union flag against his own kith and kin, his own household, his own splendid Virginia! And rejected of the handsomest woman then alive! — Poor chap!

I said those words under my breath, but with unction, one day as I hobbled slowly along a garden walk and met him coming up from the stables after his long and solitary ride: he went almost daily on these sombre expeditions, we knew not whither; and as he came round a bend of the path, the look on his face was so close to anguish, the sort of anguish seen only in one who is under the knife of moral surgery, that a boy-and-boy emotion took hold of me. I limped straight to him and held out my hand; there was nothing to say. He did not reach me his right hand at once; first, he took from it a tiny bunch of the small, familiar flowers one finds in every cranny, and then responded slowly, but with his unvarying courtesy, to my rough act



of sympathy. I think he appreciated it, for I am no meddler; and indeed I had said nothing. We Heighs always mind our own business, — when we mind any at all. In silence Clayton and I turned to a garden bench, half buried in the tall box-bushes; being a bit weary, I sank down with more of the invalid in my posture than I meant to show. He looked at me kindly, inquiringly, smiling faintly as my stubborn head shook warning against any inquiries about health. — You know me well enough, young fellow, to guess my hatred of these morbid confidences. My father always frowned when people asked how he felt; to be weak, fallen cherub, is miserable, but to be asked about your sensations of weakness is the deuce. — Clayton's smile faded away.

“We're not a merry pair, are we?” I queried. There was just a bit of recoil in him, as if I were calling attention to the fact that each of us wore a fine large mitten marked K. W. But I was only looking at the hand with those flowers in it. He laid them on his knee and stared at them.

“From my old home, Heigh, — off yonder, you know. And about all that is left of it.”

“I know the brigade,” said I, with prompt viciousness, — “and the brigands. Always on hand to plunder and burn, and never in time to fight! Look here, Clayton, that is the worst of



this war. At times I even feel like throwing up the job."

"You are kind to say it."

"I mean it."

"I believe you, quite."

"And," I went on, determined to leave the wedding and its suggestions far behind us, — "it must be tough for you to run against so many of your own people."

"It is not cheerful." He looked straight into the box across the path. "Would you enjoy this sort of thing, Heigh? At Gettysburg I found my cousin, Price Sudbury, dying on the field. One of my men had shot him. I did what I could. He thanked me...ceremoniously. I stammered out some stuff, — what I felt. 'Oh, that's quite right,' he said; would hear no talk about home...send no messages...just politeness and reserve; presently he rolled over away from me, to hide his last agony, and died. — These are my little diversions, Heigh."

"Tough," I assented; "tough." And then, to cheer him, "But it can't last much longer," I added. "Eliot tells me the collapse is really coming. Then the Washington people will give you free hand here; think of the good you can do."

He didn't answer this suggestion. "You



think," he said, "that the end is near? They'll fight, you know, to the last ditch."

"Eliot says something has turned up, and Lee will be crushed. They're no good without Lee. I hate, though, to think that Virginia has to take the brunt.... But ask Eliot."

"I will."

A warning bell rang; we got up and moved slowly toward the house. "Well," said I, "to-night arrives the millionaire. Banker Cards, eh? Well, bless his big, brave, patriotic heart! Shy he was, and silent; now he has been talking with Lord Palmerston and giving diplomatic tips to Mr. Adams. Let's ask him to have us promoted. Shall we say 'sir' to him? Why, I remember how my mother, the kindest woman alive, but awfully set about the family and that, boggled at the idea of Cards coming in to tea when the cousins were out in force. I tried to lug him in, but he knew. 'Your mother won't like it,' says he. Then the old governor spied us. 'Bring in Linsey, John,' he called out; and afterward, I recollect, he said to mother, 'Why, Sarah, we don't live in feudal times!' *Feudal times*, says the dear old boy. And now look at millionaire Lin! *He* doesn't live in feudal times. I tell you what, Clayton, here you and I were drinking ditchwater, chewing wheat-ears in the field, and getting potted with minié-bullets



all over the place, — to put Mr. Cards in funds. Eh? It's *we* that live in feudal times."

"Take my arm, Heigh. Don't excite yourself."

"Well, — you're not so calm either, come to that!" Certainly he didn't seem cool; but when I looked up, the cause of his perturbation was clear. Eliot and Kriemhild West came arm in arm toward us along the walk between box-bushes and the old-fashioned, kindly rows of flowers, a preposterously happy pair.

— "How did they look, Major? The portraits of my uncle, you know, are not so imposing; I suppose it's the fault of the photographers..."

"Oh, I know. I know. In the flesh, — well, he looked like you; only thinner, wirier; he had a moustache and enthusiasm..."

"And she?"

"How can I tell you? *Her* photographs are worse yet. I've promised not to show the one she gave me. ... Oh, yes, I've got it. Yes. Women then wore ungodly big skirts, you know, — crinoline, — and things in their hair, — 'rats' and 'waterfalls,' — ugh! But she looked all right herself. All right? Why she was the handsomest woman alive. That's all. We know Cleopatra was handsome, because Mark Antony lost the world for her; and we'd know nothing more about her, even if some rascal of a Bran-



tôme had been near enough to the galley for indiscretions of description.... I had no world to lose for Kriemhild West in those days; what I did was to lose my breath and sit down on the next garden bench. Clayton waited by me; the fact was I had walked too far for my gills.... But they forgot me soon, when the two came and stood there, and just buttered solemn old Clayton. They wanted to make him amends for their own bliss. "I am not a hilarious person at best, cousin," says the poor chap in his quiet, southern voice; "and I shall let the negroes do my singing and dancing. But I shall be sincerely happy in your happiness." — Who could ask more? Kriemhild, however, gave a little sigh. "Come, John," she said, as to a shaggy Newfoundland, some old dog Tray; "come in with us and eat some more strength." So we started back quietly, with scattered words which fell now and then, here and there, like the leaves dropping at intervals in the silence about us, heralds of the coming autumn.

We were livelier at a picnic which we improvised that afternoon, so mild and summer-like was the season, in a far-away corner of the woods. Old Nathan's family was gathering for the nuptials, and increased our little party from day to day; we made a fairly populous outburst. Perhaps it was the merrier because our



Virginian's sad face was not to be seen. Clayton had to write letters, he said; and remained in his room. The rest of us were fain to be stupidly vivacious after the manner of all folk at a picnic. I made jokes of the old Heigh brand; and even got license, though the ladies thought it very vulgar and low, to read from a comic book which I carried about with me in those days; and thus became the humble tool of Providence in opening the minds of that puzzled audience to the sayings of Artemus Ward. Aunt Mary, Nathan's elderly and unmarried daughter, was quite scandalized; Dolly West couldn't see the jokes, but laughed; while Horace, her sire, was plainly disgusted. He was a man of parts, read poems by Felicia Hemans, and had a quotation from Tupper, the book of his youth, ready on every occasion. Horace and I were never too sympathetic; but it was not Horace's fault. A widower, Nathan's only living son since the early death of Kriemhild's father, Horace was already in his forties and of excellent repute in hall and bower and public haunt. An ardent republican and unionist, he should now, he said, be in the field and at the front, a musket on his shoulder; but he had developed a mysterious threatening of pneumonia, caught in the recent drafts, complicated by a congenital heart trouble, and he was forced to pay the bounty and send a



substitute in his stead. He was a model citizen ; and yet, thinking of him as possible father-in-law, I always performed in private a grimace of the most histrionic intensity....

It was jolly, I say, at the picnic. Cousin Nathan, like all Pennsylvanians, keen for a chance at coal, iron, oil, hailed Horace and Dolly and sundry other guests to see some mineral deposits not far away, waving his hammer as he ambled off, a fine, hearty old boy, dear to my soul. Aunt Mary, Kriemhild's Aunt Mary, spread shawls for me to lie on.... "Yes, John, I *will* do it. And don't mind what I said about that dreadful book ! Won't you read *mine*, now ?" — She held out Bishop Kipper's *Why am I a Churchman ?* But I said, "No, my father would be angry ;" and Aunt Mary just laughed, patting me very gently on my sound shoulder.... I reclined near her under the fragrant pines, and watched the two lovers only a little space away. They needed no vulgar retreats to solitude ; happy, quietly happy, they sat there talking mainly together, now and then to us. They didn't seem to mind the serene, simple-hearted old woman and the big, half-invalid boy.... I like to remember such scenes.... Kriemhild said something about the peaceful beauty of the afternoon ; Eliot replied something about augury.



"Just what, Colonel Harvard College," she queried, "*is* augury? What did augurs do?"

"Oh,—they took sticks,—wands. And they marked out the heaven into quarters, and then they waited for a flock of birds as omen. It depended, you see, first on the kind of birds and secondly, on the point of the compass from which they came."

"Give me your cane. I'm going to try it." — She stood a little space from him and marked off her regions with graceful wavings of the cane.

"Let me help you," quoth the Colonel, rising, with ardour for divination in his glance. She was fair to look upon, swaying there with inexpressible grace; no one has yet invented the quaternions for that motion....

"Stay where you are, sir! No interruptions during service! Wait for the benediction. — Now, come, birdies! Come!"

"But here am I!"

"Tame domestic fowl don't count. Come, birdies!" She stamped her foot prettily. "Come." — And behold, the birdies came. Two men emerged from a winding path suddenly upon our little group,—Linsey Cards, and George Clayton as his guide. The banker had arrived by an earlier train,—perhaps he had chartered a special: who knows?—and Clayton politely did the honours, escorting his



guest immediately to the friends who now greeted him with an emotion that fairly took my breath. I didn't know that Eliot cared so much for him. How they clasped and held hands, those two! Cards was a new creature to me; he had not been looking for two years eye to eye into Europe's keenest faces for nothing; four-square, erect, poised, — well, you know the man now. Imagine him still under thirty! And Eliot seemed to flash back into all his old alertness as he stood there with his friend's hand tight clasped in his own.... "If *that* is the type of combined soldier and civilian of the North," so I muttered to Clayton, looking at them, "the South is doomed indeed." Clayton made no answer; he was gazing, poor chap, at Kriemhild. She, too, was surprised, pleased; she greeted Cards cordially. The old partition fell down forever, and I need not say how Cards fairly glowed with pleasure at the change.... Come back, Grandsire Nathan, come back, Horatius, back and welcome this man; sup with him, drink with him, make him one of us. — You know what that means, or rather what it used to mean, in Philadelphia. Elbert-Kelley and his breed have spoiled the old exclusive ways.... And so at last we gather for the rustic meal, — but only rustic in its setting. We are hungry, jolly; there is great clatter, chatter: then a lull.



Cousin Nathan uncorks a special bottle, and Horace names the vintage.... We have put aside now the desire of meat; it is the accursed hour of toasts.... I loathe the custom, as you know; but Cousin Nathan has notions derived from his uncle, the chief-justice, and loves, after the manner of that mighty prandial orator, to combine sentiment and wit. We drink to our new guest, eliciting a pleasant brevity of thanks in measured tones. And then, of course, the great effort. "Let us drink," says Nathan, cheerily, "to the welfare of *both* Unions — fill, George, my boy; are you dreaming? — to both Unions!"

— "My father," whispers Horace, with great suavity, to Cards, "is very happy in this line, you know. He frequently quotes Latin, — frequently."

"Quite so," says Cards. He has not yet made Horace out. — And now the sun has dropped behind the blue hills; we drive home in the gathering dusk. They put me, I remember, into the corner of the rear seat in one of the open mountain wagons, as carefully as if I had been a crate of chinaware, wrapping me, moreover, in a cloak and tucking shawls about my legs; Kriemhild herself came next me, saying the two friends should sit together in front of us and talk their fill. Clayton, who seemed to me to let his broken heart show its fracture



more frankly than was to be expected from a cavalier on his own soil, was sent as a kind of Black Care to remind our driver of his mortality; silent and isolated sat the Virginian all our way home. But Rollo and Jonas talked for a dozen, — Harvard days, the war, doings abroad.... Kriemhild looked at me thoughtfully, as if she would like to invent some comprehensive blessing for me. My face answered in that inveterate grin which passes with us Heighs as a smile; but my heart sent up a sigh.

“I wish...” she began.

“I know you do,” said I.

“Silly dear old John!”

“Precisely.”

“Not at all! That is, — I mean ...”

“I can’t even *drive* now, can I?”

— I believe women like this sort of thing; at any rate, the soft look on her face and a strain of loyalty in my crabbed mind drew me beyond my wont. We were going from the light into a bit of forest, dusky and full of odorous pine.

This time I didn’t try to kiss her; but I did close out a long debt of sentiment and ... well, sentiment. “Kriemhild,” I said, with a little quiver in my voice, “God bless you.... And when I say that the man there, to whom you give your heart, is worthy of you, and deserves his happiness, tremendous as that happiness must be....”



Mountain roads are rough. Just then we hit a big stone, and as we were at a sharp trot, the result was disconcerting to a degree. I was the invalid; and Kriemhild beside me flung out her hand to hold and stay me precisely as in front of me the ever serviceable Cards, swiftly helpful, undertook a similar office. Instead of grasping me, each of them grasped the other's hand. It was most amusing, and put a deserved end to my sentiment. Indeed, we all laughed so heartily that the episode, in common justification of our sense of humour, had to be detailed to George Clayton.

"Really? Oh, indeed!" was his intelligent comment; and then he relapsed into his silent mood. Not we, though. Cards and Eliot faced halfway to the rear, and the four of us were all as arch and funny and full of chat as we could be. We came into the open country now, and struck the smooth highroad; talking on, as I remember, until importunate influences of night began to work upon us. Silence fell little by little into our more incoherent efforts, muffling them at last altogether, as a round moon swam up over the pines through the cool, windless air. How peaceful it all was! This too, though late and waning, would be their wedding moon.

Meanwhile, the Army of the Potomac was lying only five-and-twenty miles or so away.



Our outmost pickets were a few rods from Lee's own lines. Now and again, some cavalry troop dashed against the enemy, exchanged shots, and galloped off again, with perhaps a dozen riderless horses and leaving as many blue-coated forms prone upon the Virginia sod.



## V

THERE was no fear, however, for us. The mountain walls were between us and the two armies; while we knew that after Gettysburg and Vicksburg no invasion of the North would be so much as imagined by the confederate staff. We thanked the fates for sparing us this fine old house, rejoiced in our easy communication with home, and looked eagerly for new triumphs of the union flag. But the late summer and autumn of 1863 were marked, as you remember, by no action of note between these armies of the east; marchings and counter-marchings went on, concentrations, advances, and retreats; but despite impatient orders from Washington, a great battle could not be fought. So history records the case; but history does not tell of the brilliant raids, the surprises, the deep and far-reaching plans, which officers carried out... on paper; in reality one or two enterprises of the sort at least came within sight of success. Kilpatrick almost captured Richmond. But for one of these affairs actually undertaken, there were fifty which, planned and attempted in secret, were in secret



frustrated. Against our plots, too, there was store, surplus, of counterplots in Richmond.

Eliot told us of sundry failures in the past, and pointed out the cause. At first it was amateur bungling; then it was the spy, the traitor, who by some trick wormed his way into every enterprise and betrayed it. "We are done, now, with *him*," said the Colonel, grimly, — he preferred the regular title to his generalship of volunteers, — "and the next attempts will be neither bungled nor betrayed! I could tell you things!"

This heartened us all mightily. What with such an assurance, from such a source; what with the early autumnal peace all about us, crops fairly housed, and the high woods aflame in gorgeous yellows and reds like banners of triumph; what with the happy rites so close at hand; small wonder that we wagged our heads in assent when old Cousin Nathan declared that by the time yonder trees were in new leaf, our excellent Major-general Eliot here, in civilian clothes, and his wife, in a new Easter bonnet, could "take a through ticket from Boston to Charleston and see the old flag flying all the way." Oddly enough, the only dissenters were Cards, who smiled, — he had been more conservative of late, as his letters kept him posted about sentiment abroad, — and Clayton, who frowned.



I sympathized with Clayton; and certainly the old man harped too much on this wedding string. Keep a word like "wife" until after the ceremony. It jarred even on me.

A pleasant week had now sped since the picnic, and our wedding company was all assembled; we were literally on the eve of the marriage-day. The Boston party, of course, made itself felt quite out of proportion to its size. Indeed, over a snug wood-fire in the big drawing-room that night, from sheer wantonness, I suppose, we twitted Eliot openly about his Bostonese. Even the Philadelphia worm will turn. I deplored Kriemhild's uncanny prospect in being forced to acquire such an outrageous dialect. Aunt Mary, true to her Bishop Kipper, put in serious words about her niece's islanded Episcopalian faith in that Unitarian sea.

"Unitarians," so Kriemhild was pleased to say, with apologies to Eliot's famous "Uncle George," the Tom Eliot of many a legend, and understood in matters of creed to be "nothing whatever," — "Unitarians make my blood run cold!"

This was too inviting for Grandsire Nathan to resist; we heard the dogs unleashed to run down an ancient quarry; but it was soon over. "I know," he said, "*one* Unitarian that doesn't make your blood run cold! — Eh, George?"

We presented arms to aged humour in its



Old Madeira habit; and Kriemhild went on with her lament.

"And *such* preachers! When Mrs. Willy's aunt died, old Mrs. Danvers, you know, they sent to Boston for her minister.... Oh, that funeral sermon and that prayer!"

"Just why 'Oh!'" asks "Uncle George" suavely, "except on general principles?"

"Why, — he called God 'Infinite and Nameless Presence': wasn't that awful? And he asked the Infinite and Nameless Presence to take back poor old Mrs. Danvers into 'Nature's great Activities' until the 'Translated Vital Forces, pursuing a beautiful mission in plant and herb...'"

"Oh, stop, — pray stop!" Aunt Mary was agitated.

Tom Eliot laughed. "That must have been a Buddhist from Hingham," he said, "or something freakish. But how much better it is all done in Italy! Those smooth old priests and the Latin and the candles and the ... Hallo! What's this?" He stopped short. Cards was calling attention to some noise outside; Cards had now as little to say on Unitarians as he had on the conduct of the war. But he was practical. There were horses' hoofs on the drive, barking of the dogs, voices back and forth....

Eliot, as he rose, muttered something in Latin



about the *profani* keeping their distance. — “It was profane,” assented Aunt Mary, with this awful talk still ringing in her ears; she was sure Eliot would soon be in the church.... Uriah, the black butler, had now put his grizzled head through the doorway.

“What is it?”

“Soldiers, sir,” answered Uriah, unconsciously speaking, looking, and acting a minor part in *Macbeth*.

“They want...? *What* soldiers?”

“Union, Mass’ Nathan. To see the Colonel.”

“I’ll go, sir, I’ll go. No, Clayton! John Heigh, you desperate villain, sit still! Amuse the ladies! Talk about Boston! And no tragedy, mind! — There isn’t any.” — He went out.

Voices rose and fell in the hall; heavy footsteps were heard, and the door of the library closed upon Eliot and his visitors. In ten minutes he was back again; and the smile on his face spoke of pleasure in two sections.

“Just a sergeant and a few privates with secret despatches for me. They came from... well, not from the main force. And they brought fine news, great news; by-and-by you shall know it. Not now. And... Kriemhild... nothing to interfere with to-morrow.... I took the liberty, sir, of sending the fellows



to get some food. I've a bit of writing to do, and then I shall join you again. That's all." — And he left us once more.

"If I have to say it," commented Kriemhild proudly, "there is Waltham Eliot for you. First his duty; then, at the earliest possible moment, relieving our minds; then to do his work to the end."

"Selfish business-men like me," confessed Cards, with pretty implication of compliment, "would have forgotten all about you outsiders until the thing was done."

"We're training for bachelors, aren't we, Cards?" said I.

"Not a bit of it," interposed Kriemhild; "I shall have both of you safely married, in Philadelphia too, before next year is out. We know some charming girls there, don't we, Dolly?"

Dolly is not incisive enough even to look uncomfortable. Horace, as man about town and member of our one club, tells of several matches said to be imminent, with considerable talk of family ties and intricate relationships. In the midst of his latest anecdote, Eliot enters the room again; and we all gather closer about the fire. The wind had risen outside, accenting the cosiness and comfort of our group. We talked sprightly nothings, as people do when they are very happy and begin to feel intimate;



then we grew quieter and quieter in our sense of peace. I shall never forget that group about the fire; I can still see each face as clear as it appeared to me then. The expressions ranged from an intense happiness playing in one rich tone over the lovers, through a dignified vacuity on the features of old West, — who could do his honest thinking, and effective thinking, on occasion, but in true Philadelphian faith believed that frequent holidays were as good for the intellect as for the muscles, — through placidity and neutral but kindly content in the guests at large, through my own stupid grin, half melancholy and half congratulative, through the quiet strength of Linsey Cards, down to that settled gloom of George Clayton. It was no obvious, no sullen gloom, just the background and the suggestion; no one could have met all the requirements of the occasion better than he met them; but I could divine the gloom, deep and irremediable, behind the courtesy of his glance and the brief kindness of his words. I say I remember well every face which fronted the fire that night; but best of all I have in memory the melancholy and the hopelessness on the features of George Clayton.



## VI

IVIES and other green things, and bright autumn leaves, and such flowers as braved an early frost, were hung about the house. The rector of a remote church, as yet unscathed by war, had ridden over betimes, and was smiling on the green things, smiling on the guests, smiling at the scent of old Virginia cookery. He was vastly in the way. Exigencies of one sort and the other forbade a wedding before noon; Aunt Mary herself gave a dispensation for the purpose, and only hoped there was no bad omen in it. It was not to be until six o'clock; then a great supper; and then bride and groom should quietly drive off to a place near by, lent them, in English style, for the honeymoon. Eliot must be within reach of despatches. But the crazy rector, poor soul, rode over to breakfast, and was an irrelevancy all day long. He engaged busy people in conversation, and apologized, with quick retreat, for intruding upon the Boston group, who had nothing whatever to do. Aunt Mary, with all her grovelling reverence for the cloth, was distinctly heard once to say "Bother Mr. Dodough!"



—and before the servants. Old West, who was very busy, uttered a plain word of commination, and told the butler to give Mr. Dodough Mr. West's compliments, and Mr. Dodough would find some devotional books in the library, "and my son Horace, — and cigars. Get him cigars, Uriah, and a glass of wine. And glue him to Mr. Horace. Ah! And come back here, Uriah! Mind to-night, that Mr. Tom Eliot of Boston — white moustache, eh? — is one of the few who will know my Château Yquem from root-beer, Uriah."

"But the Colonel, Marse Nathan, the Colonel, *he* know...."

"Ordinarilly, Uriah, ordinarilly. Not to-night. Eh? Now, boy, off with you...."

At last the sun has stretched out all the hills, and the parson has been pushed somehow into his place, trying hard to assume that air of Bless-you-all-and-what-an-occasion; he is also muttering to himself the two Christian names he has to use, one strange and the other uncanny, and in point of fact he will presently call the Colonel *Kriem-hilddd* very majestically. Everybody is alert. We are all in the great drawing-room, which looks fine enough with its colonial furniture and its old-fashioned flowers.... Here they come.



Colonel Waltham Eliot wears the regulation uniform of his permanent rank, looking every inch the soldier that he is. The pictures of forty years ago make men in our uniform seem so truculent and so absurdly martial; but my dear old friend, dominant in his manhood, his dignity and kindliness, kept uniforms a very subordinate question. Cards, on the other hand, who supports him in this capital affair, gives one a quite lively sense of Bond-Street and guineas and the solid British way; Tom Eliot whispers to another Boston uncle the name of a famous London tailor. They know Cards of old. "Linsey-Woolsey still, for all the tailor-ing, eh?" he says. "But look at Waltham!" — That is what we are all doing, until the bride comes. — Don't ask me to describe her. — Aunt Mary weeps audibly, and tells me this is the gown in which Kriemhild's mother, poor dear, was married long ago. — Don't ask me to describe her, I say. — I stared at her, I know, as a boy stares, helpless, captive.... And now they are man and wife.

How we all got out there I could never remember, try as hard as I might. I see the driveway and the trees; I see that pale, dusty rider clear against a red sky of sunset; I see Eliot standing there close to him, talking low and



handling the scrap of paper; Kriemhild near her husband, and Cards, and old West looking quite too old in a kind of anticipative horror; and the rest of us huddled on the piazza. I glance behind us at black servants popping out their heads from places of vantage in the hall, and, stately vista, at the great dining-room doors wide open, and a table with flowers and silver and lights and dazzling spaces of linen...and I can even hear an impertinent little clock somewhere within, striking the half-hour. So I know that it was half after six, and the most perturbed wedding-party of which I ever heard or read or dreamed.

“What does the man want!—What has he done?—What has Waltham to do with it?”—So the questions fly about in our party of the middle background.—“Done spoiled a bully-good Morgan hoss; foundered, sure,” is a voice, presumably the coachman’s, from somewhere in the hall, where Africa is getting aggressively curious, but ready for retreat on the signal. Well! Horse and rider *are* as near exhaustion as may be; the man wavers now and then in his saddle; and Eliot, ever humane, notes the fact amid all his intense preoccupation with the message on his little scrap of paper. He turns around to us, pale enough, but with a strange glitter in his eye.



"This good fellow, Mr. West, has ridden from Tarkiln Corners. Will you?..."

"Bless my soul! Certainly! — Here, boy," — to a negro who appears like an exhalation from some concealing bush, — "take this horse, and see if you can save him," — Nathan evidently had some Virginian blood in him, — "and give the soldier what he wants." Off they went, groom, weary rider, and wearier horse. Eliot stood, facing us all, in the road, holding his fluttering little note; it was like an opera. Then he spoke as much to himself as to us.

"There is only one thing to do."

"No, there isn't!" This fine bit of English, I must confess, proceeded out of my own stupid mouth. Eliot smiled; he lifted the paper.

"This must be in General Meade's hand by midnight. Then — before the second midnight — we shall be in Richmond, — the army, I mean. Kriemhild, dear, I must take it."

"*No!*" — It would have done credit to a trained chorus, this "No" of ours. I lumbered to the fore. "Give me the daggers," I said; for I had had a liberal education. "You can't ride, anyway; and it's a groom's errand, not a bridegroom's." Never was feebler wit more uproariously applauded. I made lissome movements to show how well I could back my horse; but I felt the enthusiasm of our group wane ominously



as they looked at me. Eliot shook his head. "I'm game," I insisted.

"Game? No doubt of it, John. And I'd trust you gladly. But able, fit?—No. It would be a double crime to kill you and lose Richmond. No, no."—Well, he spoke the truth; riding was not my business for three months more, and I had no right to risk so mighty a mission going wrong. Sadly I stepped back, Kriemhild grasping my hand as I passed her, with a low "Dear John!"—But somebody now brushed forward by us both out into the open space; and how we all breathed deep relief as the evident but unthought-of thing came to pass! George Clayton was speaking.

"I am in uniform," he said, "and can go at once. General Meade, you say?... Give me..."

But Eliot again shook his head, this time in visible embarrassment. Both men looked agitated even beyond the exigencies of this very exigent occasion. The rest of us all felt more or less embarrassed out of sympathy. You see the situation; two old lovers of the bride, one in a fairly desperate maze over his failure, trying to go substitute for the happy husband. In another setting, it had been comedy; in any case it was embarrassing. But why should Eliot be so deeply perturbed, and why, moreover, should he



shake his head? I knew. Eliot had been instructed positively from Washington to entrust no responsible duty to the Virginian.

"Come with me, Clayton, and welcome. I shall be glad to have you;—in fact, as you know the roads so well, I shall need you. But *I* must go. Be my guide."

Clayton looked pale beyond the wont of man. He must have understood; as indeed I think Cards and one or two of the rest suspected the real situation. But he refused to accept it.

"You *must* not go, Colonel Eliot. As you say, I know the roads, and the thing can be done in a few hours. Your place is here; and the government can have..."

"I think, Clayton, that I must interrupt you. Delay is very bad; and I have made my decision. It is absolutely my duty. Chivalry from Bayard to Havelock could do no more than you have done. Kriemhild and I thank you—and, potentially, old John here—as few persons ever thanked a friend. After all, though, what is it? A ride through no dangers whatever, on the greatest mission of the war. This in Meade's hands—think of it—and the days of the rebellion are numbered! Of course, I return, and you too, at once. My mission ends with the delivery of this paper.—So," he turned to Mr. West, "two of your best mounts, sir, please, and



immediately. A bite or two won't hurt us, and a glass of wine. Bring it all here for us both," he called to the retreating servant.

You can fancy the confusion, the groups, the forward-and-back, the loud talk everywhere, anarchy of the household, and the whispered, hurried good-bye of the just-married pair, who were after all quieter and more at ease than any one else, except, perhaps, Cards. Poor fellow! with all his wisdom, he couldn't get us out of this scrape as at the quarry; he contented himself with little practical and helpful things. For instance, he suggested that light cloaks be strapped to the saddles, for a chance halt or bivouac; and he fetched Eliot and Clayton their swords.

"Surely you'll not need those?" so I ventured to say. "You've your pistols. You don't want those irons banging about you. It's not parade."

"I don't know," says Eliot. "Pistols will be too noisy near the lines.... These are good for quiet work." So Cards gave Eliot his sword, just as the horses were brought up; and Kriemhild, taking Clayton's sword herself, handed it with infinite grace to her cousin. "Oh, you are more than good," she said; but Clayton was too full of his emotion to reply. He only bowed acknowledgment; and I wondered if any face was ever so white and drawn as his.

A stirrup-cup for last, on the restless horse;



Eliot takes it from his wife, and calls out his wild, almost joyous toast. He felt his own mettle now; he saw the great things ahead; it was war time; flushed with the fire of it all, he sat straight, drank the last drop, and hurled the glass far away. "To the downfall of the rebellion, and to our meeting here at Christmas with the old flag floating over Richmond!—And good-bye, good-bye!—Clayton!"

They were off. We caught fire, too, now; and a great hurrah went up. I told you it was a kind of opera; a confoundedly effective one, by Jove! Kriemhild stood free and alone, before us all, out in the open space, the white dress clinging about her, and one white arm waving her good-bye. Eliot turned with a last greeting, lost in the sound of the hoof beats which pounded the hard drive. It was fair dusk now; we could hardly follow the riders as they swept, two mere blurs in the light mist, round a bend of the avenue. But the air was very still; no one said a word; and for some time we could hear that double rhythm of the first gallop far along the southern road. Then it died away. We shivered; and Nathan West drove us all within doors. I found that somebody had thrown a cloak over my shoulders; I think it was Cards. He did his best to be useful that night.



## VII

EVERY one had enough self-control to say nothing of Hamlet, as we took our seats round the table and began the wedding-feast. I always think that we acted admirably that night; dignified without solemnity, and cheerful without unnatural mirth, we made the best of it. Hard for Kriemhild was the occasion, very hard; but she rose to it finely. Tom Eliot came out in great form; he sped his easy wit, his epigrams, and told his stories of cities and men, manners and government; we drew from Cards, too, some effective anecdotes of the dominant and financial world abroad. And it was all so comfortable; such a sense of home and peace was about us! Old portraits smiled from the walls; the generous cheer warmed us to response, and spread from neighbour to neighbour the whispered mutual assurance that all was well, and that a ride through the cool September night, on such a glorious errand, was something that the gallant colonel and his wife would tell about with pride, half a century hence, to grandchildren gathered in this very room.... Had we lived two hundred



years earlier, we should have spoken out the prophecy; as it was, each confided it to his neighbour.

So we sat through the wedding-feast not ingloriously; and when the ladies left us, we felt that the maimed rite had been well rescued from failure. Old West, of course, Tom Eliot and other male relatives, Horace and Cards, even I, despite plain hints about convalescence and bed, sat up to meet and greet the colonel and his generous squire. Food was to be ready for them; it would be well on in the small hours when they arrived. We gathered for our vigil before the fireplace in the hall, and Uriah made us a fine blaze for brightness as well as warmth. Little rings and clouds of cigar-smoke scudded into the draught and up the chimney. Other materials of comfort were about us. Our peerless man of the world took up the talk again.

"That nephew of yours, West," said Tom Eliot, easily, eyeing his cigar with approval, "Clayton, — fine fellow, by Jove, — acted remarkably well."

"He did, Eliot; he did. He always does."

"But he seemed so devilish excited for such a cool and silent man, — soldier, too, don't you know? I watched him like a hawk. Was he thinking of the old Border chances, — swift



horse, and bride in the saddle before him, and off, eh? It's a case of Lochinvar *manqué*, isn't it?"

"Lochinvar? Oh, I see!—Ha, ha! Very good!" said Horace the classical and affable; "but Lochinvar *what?* What was your Latin?"

Mr. Tom Eliot, smiling, put the question by, a proceeding almost indifferent to Horace, who had been fortifying the cardiac processes. — "No? Really?" said the Bostonian, as old West shook his head and declared that we were all wrong there.

"No? Well, then,—I stick to my Scottish precedents, you see,—he looked uncommonly like loupin' o'er a linn, and that sort of thing, if not like running off with a bride." — Mr. Tom Eliot wrote now and then for the *Oceanic Monthly* and had literary leanings of the gracious, condescending sort. — "After all," he went on, gazing fondly into the fire and seeing who knows what pictures of a laughing lad and a teasing, jolly uncle adrift in Europe years ago, "after all, it's that boy of mine! He makes a selfish, cynical old bachelor like me fairly enthusiastic. I wish his father were alive to see him now.—You knew him intimately as a lad, Captain Heigh? Aha, that duel, what? Perfect, perfect.—And you, of course, Mr. Cards, were acquainted with him at college."



I nodded. Cards shifted his legs, then smiled. "You have no monopoly of him for memories, sir," he replied, ignoring that drop from cordiality to ceremony, "not even as Uncle George! Why, hang it all! at college they used to call us two Rollo and Jonas."

The Jonas of it tickled Tom Eliot, and he laughed his musical laugh. There was a little silence.

"Take it all in all," said I, "if you wished now to show a real American, the best we breed, to some foreign chap, some Dickens — confound him! — for more *Notes*, who is there that you could find better than Waltham Eliot?"

"Nobody," said Cards.

"I agree with you," added Nathan West; "but if some one were present with a larger strain of southern blood than I can boast, you could hear a pretty eloquent plea for George there, — type of the chivalry and all that. A sounder gentleman doesn't breathe. He's had no chance for his qualities as an officer; a southerner in our army has hard going.... But I grant your claim, John. — Waltham: God bless him! — Fill up!"

We drank, praising both; and then, from that lauding word we turned to talk of the war, of the figures in it, — who had begun, who had failed, who had come to renown, and who had fallen by the way.



## VIII

NIGHT closed about these riders a half-hour from the hall, as they trotted steadily along. It was native heath to Clayton; but in his overwrought state of mind he came near making a bad blunder, turning to the right at a crossing. Eliot, always wary, lighted a hasty match, read the plain legend on the guide board, and called Clayton back to the straight road. "Fine mess!" he cried. "That would have taken us to your Uncle Robert, not to Meade. I admire General Lee; but I shall defer my call until the war is over,—early next month. And I say, Clayton! Look sharp, my dear fellow! We can't risk another mistake."

Clayton pulled himself together, apologized, and proceeded to give a clear account of the case. "We are still on the Old Pike. The next turn really is to the right,—see the stars; we are bearing a bit north now, but the road we shall take leads straight to our lines."

Eliot welcomed the lucid statement for itself and for its implication; the poor chap's mind must be kept off the wedding at any cost, and



so, affable as the archangel, our colonel talked of the important errand before them, told something of its reach and consequence, and dwelt upon the inevitable final result. "It means that we shall crush Lee utterly — I hope with as little bloodshed as possible. Think of that!" Clayton did think of it, and they rode on a good space in silence.

Now they came to the height of the pass in a range of partly wooded hills; over the tree-tops, over a deep little chasm and the sharp rise from it just in front of them, they looked away into the valley where our army of the Potomac lay in camp stretched far along the sinuous line of a stream. They held rein, Eliot and Clayton, under a sky sprinkled with dim stars, and amid the silence of the hills. A light mist, still transparent, was gathering in the hollows and in the plain.

"It's easy enough now, thank God! How different it will all seem a few hours hence as we spur by this place for home!"

"Home!" — Clayton's voice vibrated strangely. He had "home" neither before him nor behind him.... It went to the colonel's heart, the pathos of this cry from a homeless, joyless man. The horses walked discreetly down the slope of the road into a hollow before them, close together; Eliot put out his hand and touched his comrade's shoulder.



"Clayton," he said, "I am so sorry for you. Silence is right in these things, and I must not force my sympathy on one who has never asked for it, never acknowledged a cause for it. But do let me feel for you,—with you. I know...."

"Ah!" It came like an explosion. "You have guessed it, then?"

Eliot smiled in the darkness. Trees were arched thickly over them; but a few paces ahead was open ground and the dull light of stars. "Yes," he said gently, "I have guessed it. And... Kriemhild...."

"God bless her! She has our blood in her veins."

"If there were any sacrifice we could make..."

"If... See, Colonel Eliot!" They reined up their horses in the open place. "See,—could you not make that sacrifice, the supreme sacrifice, great as it is?"

The poor man's brain must be turned. Eliot spoke slowly, distinctly, as to a child. "That sacrifice, dear fellow? No. Think a little."

"It is not too late."

"Not too late? How? What?"

"No, there is still time. Here we two are; and you have guessed my secret. Go over the struggle with me. Put yourself in my place; put all else, your friends, your kin, what the world might say, your wife herself,—put all



aside. Don't destroy a brother. Be generous. Renounce. I know what I ask, — but renounce."

"Renounce? What? My *wife*?"

"Oh!" Disgust, wrath, scorn, all were concentrated in the syllable. And "Oh!" again. "Are *you* in that fool's mind, too? Kriemhild! No! Have you not understood me?"

"Renounce what, then?" Eliot's voice rang clear. "What is all this? You don't love her? You love..."

"Virginia! My state, my people, the South!"

"Oho! And you rode with me.... And you would turn.... Oho! All these months, — years, — in that uniform?"

Men were schooled in those days to surprise, but Eliot's reaction was cruel. Their horses were now reined up obliquely, one pointing partly south, the other opposite. Eliot again broke the pause.

"I am unwilling to say 'traitor.'..."

"No, no. Or, yes, — traitor. As you will. Colonel Eliot, tear that paper to pieces; ride back; then shoot me down like a dog. Say the Confederates... Or, stay; you cannot do that. I cannot do the thing myself, God help me! I'll ride rather to the other lines and find my death there. But give this up! Save the South! Spare it!"

"Clayton, I pity you."



"I want no pity. I have kept my word. I looked for Confederate triumph, for peace, for help from England. The last hope is gone; and this is more than I can bear. You are a gentleman, Eliot. You will not see us trampled under dirty politicians' feet.... If Lee holds out awhile, honourable peace must come, as many of the North wish already. I can't bear it, I tell you. I am my father's son, my mother had my promise: but I am also a son of Virginia. And they never foresaw this.... Spare us, Eliot! Could I say more? The South lies at your feet. Spare her."

"Clayton, I say I am sorry for you. Turn back. You need not ride to our lines. But now let me by you; you block my way, and time is going fast. Think this thing clearly. I have my plain duty. I wish to be considerate, gentle; but now I leave you. No, no more argument or pleading. It can do no good. Why,—you are mad, sir! Let me pass."

"Your wife! Go back to your wife—you shall have honour, children, happiness.... I take all the disgrace.... Spare the South, and go back to your wife!"

"Clayton, enough of this. Now I command you. As a man, I pity you. As your superior officer, I order you to your duty...."



“I ask no pity for myself....”

“Come, sir, enough. Let me by, or else....”

“Ay, — or else?”

— No more words now. Again, as at our old quarry, it was to be swords. Some chivalrous instinct of these two men, I imagine, rather than mere consideration of what might be expedient, sent their hands to the sword-hilt and not to the holsters.... The spirited horses, scared by ring of steel, began to rear and plunge about. Onset and rush of attack, perhaps a nobler mount, gave Eliot the better of this strange encounter. Slowly his enemy was forced back, over the crest of the ridge; but as Eliot impetuously pressed on, he suddenly lost the firm outlines of opposing horse and rider, blurred against a background of road and trees. They were there, close before him, however, a dark mass; clear-cut, himself, upon the northern sky, he rose in his stirrups and struck a furious blow, breaking quite through the futile opposition of his enemy and crowding him away. One moment both horses swayed aside; then with a shout the colonel swung clear and spurred for the plain, — a fraction of a second too late. The last stroke of Clayton's sword, made doubly strong by the momentum of his plunging horse, could not meet that exultant foe, but it followed him; with a cruel cut sheer



through the back of his neck, Eliot fell dead into the road.

Here, by all rule, is the end of my chapter, and the close of my epic. But I chance the anticlimax so as to tell a real story. — You have not interrupted me at all, young fellow, and I see you are wide awake. You knew dimly that your uncle was treacherously killed; you didn't know all this. Eh?

“No. And, Major, — pardon me. But how did *you* know it?”

“Well, my boy, I knew Clayton. One day I may show you his letter.... But wait awhile for that. Let me round up this horror now.” —

Clayton somehow found the paper, and thrust it with trembling fingers into his pocket. With infinite pity, he laid the body under a tree by the roadside, his own cloak folded beneath and the dead man's spread above.... Then, by well-known paths and lanes, remorse at his throat, he rode back, away, then turned, and so headed for the Confederate lines. The worst was done; what else could he do for the cause? Die, for his own part; but what if another message like this, by other hands, were speeding to Federal headquarters? It must come into Lee's own possession, and at once. He spurred away.



Now, speaking in defiance of rhetoric and romance, I say what a good thing it would have been for all concerned in the bloody business of that night, had it come early to their knowledge that the main document was really better lost than kept, was only a decoy, a mere ruse, cleverly contrived in Richmond ; that Eliot's failure would only be a blessing to the Federal arms, saved from an audacious snare ; and that this pale rider, this lover of Virginia, desperately spurring south, had only thwarted a last hope of the Confederacy ! Anticlimax that, and full measure of it, and anticlimax can be tragedy. Was it anticlimax, though, the riderless horse come back, the search made, the body found, when they seized Clayton's papers at the Hall and discovered a note hastily scribbled to me while we were all at the door, as this poor man thought he was safe in his scheme to ride off alone and save his South by bloodless treachery, and yet, mindful of our talk in the garden, wished one brother-officer, at least, not to think too meanly of him ? Was this note no anticlimax ? I was to open it next morning, not earlier, so the superscription ran. It set forth the tragic agony of Clayton's case, and his resolve ; a wild cry not for pity, but for some shred of sympathy with his motive. "No one has guessed it. Thanks to the fools who chatter, and my cousin's vanity, I am supposed to be



desperate over a match where, as I may only hope but can hardly predict, the wife will perhaps rise to the stature of her husband. He is a noble fellow. The sting of this lies in deceiving him. Tell him how it was, Heigh,—and think of me as kindly as you can.”

Which of all the fools, I wonder, crowned his folly by letting Kriemhild Eliot see that note?







IV

THE COMEDY OF THE FOUNDING







## I

I THANK you heartily, boy, for asking me no more questions. I shall go on with my manuscript; it steadies me; and I see that you are finely awake. Yes. We can now attend with single heart to our business; for, you see, the foundations are all laid, and we have only to build solidly and well that House of Cards.— Let me read again.

Comedy, even according to Mr. George Meredith's most exacting demands upon it, rhymes exquisitely with the second half of the seventh decade of our late century as it unrolled itself in this western world. America stepped to the front of the stage, hand in hand with Thalia herself; literally, of course, justifying her comradeship by the incomparable "show" of Artemus Ward, by Mark Twain's new humour, and by occidental voices like those of the *Heathen Chinees*, but rising really to the height of its argument in the large jest of the situation itself. America, the America of old oratory, of revolutionary memorial, land of fair causes and ideals, set its



stern lips to the tragedy of an impending dissolution; the new America, bidding long farewell to tragedy and to ideals, unlocked its lips in farce. It was a farce, to be sure, in the grand style. We had fought and bled, we of that vast army, we had spent unimagined sums throughout the land, to let loose a swarm of ignorant blacks who have since grown steadily in menace to our civic and our national prosperity, and have helped to give the ballot its primacy among our national jokes. We made grotesque exchanges: manhood like this Eliot's, like that of a hundred thousand sterling souls, east, west, south, types like the great Lincoln himself, we handed over, all to death, and most to oblivion; while we took in pay the new activity of shoddy millionaires, the ideals of corrupt politicians, and, at best, the honest but dangerous and stolid party-worship of a Grant. How the immortals, in or out of conclave, must have laughed! If ever comedy took a nation and an epoch under her special patronage, America and 1865 can tell the tale of it. — Let me recall the facts.

In that early summer to which we now go, for welcome peace, out of the din and smoke of war, many gentlemen of the Confederate service went flying all abroad to seek a modest wage in such distant hostilities as they could find. London



clubmen ruefully paid their bets. The songs of battle died away; not the latest engagement fought in Virginia, but the latest and greatest oil-well "struck" in Pennsylvania, excited interest as news. The streets of our cities were filled with blue; every teamster and car-driver had "been with Grant," and had brought back a coat. On the walls of public buildings could be traced marks of gas-jets and decorations for the display of triumph when Richmond fell; and side by side with these were rows of nails and bits of framework where still fluttered shreds of dingy black crape. The conflict was all over, yes; but the fever of it still went on, and the restlessness of four long years would not come to rest. It turned suddenly from huge operations of war, and found outlet in still vaster schemes of peace,—a railway over the continent, a cable under the sea. Business, growing in volume and leaping over its old channels, raised one higher or sank one lower as it rushed along. Where a man, well-to-do before the war, wrote fifty thousand, he now felt that he must make it half a million; "add a 'nought' or come to naught," as Mrs. Willy Candoe—once of Boston, now married in Philadelphia to old Bishop Candoe's son, herself a dangerous, witty person—as our Mrs. Willy said smartly to the Philadelphia merchant who laid this case before her, bewail-



ing alike the vanity of riches and their coyness toward business folk of the old school. There were more crimes here in the East than we had ever dreamed about in ancient days; and yet they moved but a languid horror: it now took a very dismal treatise indeed to rouse and stir the weary fell of hair.

Bustle, clamour, speculation, surged far and wide; one spot, however, it all failed to reach, and that was Pomegranate Street in our Philadelphia, — we pronounced it “Pumgrant,” — particularly those three squares or so wherein to dwell was high respectability and peace. Fashion, so far as “new” people were concerned, was just leaving the neighbourhood of Pomegranate Street; the man who lived there because his fathers had lived there before him — and no one else could live there, when you come to think of it — snapped his fingers at fashion; and fashion meekly took the rebuke. Let us look a moment at a gentleman of this happy and ancestored class. He has an office down Walnut Street near the wharves, but he is not very busy. He arrives late in the morning, reads his paper, and discusses with a bald-headed old bookkeeper the relative merits of sails and steam; or else they sort out documents to be laid in due time before the Alabama claims commission. Perhaps he has a few ships



left, dodging about distant seas, ignorant of the end of the war and dreading a privateer. The counting-room is very plain. On the walls, otherwise so bare, hangs a spirited sketch of the *Sally Adams* after her famous voyage from Canton, hove-to off the capes to take aboard her pilot. A counterfeit Bank of England note, dated 1830, hangs in a little frame. All is of the past. There is a map of certain suburbs in which this firm was once actively interested, a farm cut into lots; it is now all solid brick houses. The conveyancer who made it, and drew the deeds for it, now and then drops in, an octogenarian; his occupation, too, is fast going. "Convey" the wise it call no more; big trust companies are beginning their reign. However, the lawyers still hold their old ways, their old repute. One of the ancient school is just coming now into the counting-room to see this lifelong friend, this merchant, this old acquaintance of our own, Nathan West; and it is Judge Caraway's habit daily thus to call for West and walk home with him for the two o'clock dinner in Pomegranate Street. The Judge you must know if you know any one; look at him as he sits in Mr. Horace's chair (Mr. Horace is always up-street at this hour conferring with the trustees of deceased Mrs. Horace's estate), smiling at his friend. — "Busy as ever, Nathan?" — They both chuckle.



"You are working Thomas to death still, I see. Tom, why don't you strike?" — Thomas Bandy the bookkeeper is properly amused; he tells the latest enormity of that young and progressive merchant who is plastering the whole countryside with noisome advertisement of his wares.

"What *are* we coming to?" cries the Judge.

"Ah!" says Bandy, wagging his head. But Nathan bids them not to vex their souls. "How's your place at Bangor coming on, Hal?"

"Well enough, well enough. But *how* do you make grass grow under your forest trees, West?"

West tells him to plant Kentucky blue-grass seed. "Get it at Kinkey's, mind; only at Kinkey's."

"At Kinkey's, eh?" repeats the Judge, vainly trying to put a bucolic touch to his fine old forensic manner. He has long white hair, and is shaved quite clean; a fringe of collar breaks over the high black "stock," sending chin and nose toward heaven at a glorious angle; observe, too, the brown gaiters and the check black-and-white trousers just a trifle too short. He is a dignified old gentleman; but he has "had his world as in his time." He played cards with Clay during his single term of service in Congress: "I recollect, Clay used to..." and all that. Old West, not to be outdone, tells of days when he



was supercargo on one of the firm's ships, and saw the Anthropophagi, and was chased by Malay pirates. "We had to draw tompions in a hurry, Hal!"—and the bookkeeper again wags his head, and the office boy wonders what tompions may be, as he hands Mr. West and the Judge their hats. It is time for dinner. Together they walk to Pomegranate Street, ascending the steps of two contiguous houses; and they shake out their keys in chorus just as the State House clock is striking. Before they go in, they glance with critical contentment at the blinding white marble trimmings and steps, the raw, beefy, hard-scrubbed brick, the white shutters, the green alley gate, the street full of serious cobblestones and lined with deferential ash and maple trees, each set in its little board casing. A fishwoman comes up the pavement with a great wooden platter balanced on her head, and cries, in raucous voice, *Shad—ōh-h!*... But Judge Caraway and Nathan West do not wince; they know, good men, that the sun is in heaven and the shad in the Delaware, and the time for fish-house punch has come again.

O Philadelphia, old Philadelphia, it was good to know thee, even in that last, faint, farewell flush of thy prime! Indeed, it was a kind of Indian summer, the few years after the war, before the new riches and the new rich came in,



before accents were imported and wealthy nobodies got into the Assembly, and dinner went to the dark hour, and our best people took to living all over the earth. I think, too, those days were particularly welcome in their relaxation of the stress and strain of heroism, in the absence of battle-talk, in the relief from constant gunpowder, and from evasive sugar at sixteen cents the pound. Particularly the descent from heroes to comfortable citizens; that was grateful. Has not my first section of hero been a trifle too awful and noble and brave? Do you not, reader who have no interest in him personally, feel a sense of relief now he is sent for good and all to the shades? His photograph is nearly my most precious household god; but do you or would you care for it? You cannot laud that type of face, allowing even for faded lines and crude art of the old camera; remark the obvious pose, the stare: long exposures, you know, brought most faces to a kind of idiocy.... Ah, put it away, put it away:—

King Pandion he is dead,  
All his friends are lapt in lead....

Let them stay there. We come to the House of Cards, a more cheerful matter. To what use, pray, could we put this Colonel, were he now alive in his old mood and fashion? He would



fit nowhere. That sort of hero would be too open, too obvious, too enthusiastic, with his on-my-brave-boys style; he would at once draw fire from our cynical, humorous folk of the pen; while with the pictorial daily papers, the writers of historical novels, even, he would fare quite as ill. He would be too reticent, too curt with reporters, those arbiters of modern fame who like their hero not silent about his feats and always ready to drive in manful spite at the other admiral.... Let Eliot rest, perturbed spirit, in his grave, and let us come back to the cheer of Pomegranate Street in 1865.

But can we enter? Money could not take you into old West's house, nor would respectable poverty bar you out, or uncouth garb. At the time of the Quaker yearly meeting, a rural contingent filled Nathan's house with relatives in the most impossible costumes and of homely, rustic phrase; incongruous they sat amid pictures and bright carpets, simply aware that the names of their forebears, identical with his, ran back to original deeds with the signature of Penn or of his deputy. This in April; month in, month out, Nathan gathered round him mainly good church people and a half renegade kind of Quaker like me. With all these it was pleasant to consort. The Philadelphia woman — of that day — for choice! She was not stupid; but she stopped



her talk at the marches of common sense and modern history. She knew French when she saw it; and of course she dallied with music after the manner of all her sex. She knew the sovereigns of England and the families of Philadelphia. She was well-bred, kindly, sleek, a trifle stout; the Pointed-Gothic style is not abundant in these parts. Scandal, — yes; why not? But she served her salad with a delicate mayonnaise, — if you must have vinegar and French dressing, go to the angular woman for it; and she laughed merrily as she told her tale. Bless her heart! You could talk at ease with her, and needed not brilliant epigram or paradox.... A plain story served. Again, there were few learned men among us. Harden Croudley, Wyeth, and the rest were unknown. There was the great Greek professor, to be sure, who had so wished a son that he might name him Homer Hesiod, and had to compromise with a girl and the disguised classicism of Lucy Ann. Few, too, were the literary folk; but those we had were sound.

So, as you see, it was no light thing that an invitation for Linsey Cards to sup with the Wests fell on that memorable day when our army of the Potomac, or a respectable part of it, marched through Pomegranate Street in final parade. Horace West, spying the banker near 'Change — his first visit in our city, he said, since



1863, — haled that hardened New Yorker home with him to see the procession. — “Come back this evening at seven, Mr. Cards, and take a plain supper with us.... Only the family.” So Nathan the hospitable. And Mr. Cards said he would come.

Only the family. You know it? Nathan, of course; Miss Mary, his daughter, zealous in good works and the delight of her rector, the Rev. Dr. Blessys; Horace, pearl of widowers, whom you remember at the wedding and who had been threatened with pneumonia and heart trouble in the drafts, an attack which Dr. Blessys called a providence and which Dr. Gullion now pronounced to have been a mere functional disturbance, ominous enough at the time, with some indications of a lesion...but happily a false alarm; and Horace's two daughters, the youngest just coming out, charming girls, particularly Dolly, whom, — thank you, Kriemhild, — I did not marry. And there was the widow, seldom seen of guests. Horace was really the greatest character among them; somehow he always seems to me to have embodied our Philadelphia of 1865. I know that he is a spectacle nowadays, and I am familiar with the stories of his senility; young Hod Cards asks pathetically why such an old circus had to be poor Hod's namesake and godfather; but in those halcyon



times few men there were who thought of laughing at Horace. Only Mrs. Willy Candoe, who had her sarcastic and unnecessary way with so many, said things to him. Once, when he chased a bat out of the drawing-room at their country place, she asked him solemnly if he knew the meaning of fear; and again she assured him he was a man to be afraid of *nothing*: each time her big, lazy husband choked down a guffaw. Now Horace was by no means a fool. In earlier days, when Daniel Webster was still thundering at the Capitol, there had been no more dashing young fellow in our parts than "Hod" or "Horry" West. Assembly, opera, any discreet little expedition behind a good horse, with a supper "out the Old Road";—of a surety Hod West was there. A selfish rake? Not at all. Devoted to his duty even as keenly as Captain Reese, R. N., late of the *Mantelpiece* man-of-war, Horace was prodigal of time and trouble for any one with the slightest claim upon him. He would cross the street to ask a nursemaid, even an ugly nursemaid, how the neighbour's sick baby was coming on. All the little girls adored him. One June day, for choice, he married Dolly Wentworth; settled in a snug house; and spent two hours more daily at the office. Twice the stork flew into his windows; he had begun to wear roomier boots and waistcoats, to look



annoyed when forward women ogled him on the street, and had acquired a particular little chirp of his own, with a "Thank you, Mrs. West, thanks, and my little girls are very well, — thank you!" when he had to revise the formula; for Mrs. West died. He sold the snug house, and came back to Pomegranate Street, quietly resolved never to marry again. The rest of his life, whatever that might be, so he told his friends, belonged to his children, — whom he handed over to his sister Mary. When the little one cried or fretted in his presence, he went to it, chucked it under the chin, smiled in a melancholy fashion, wagging his head and saying, "*there, there, there!*" — paternal to the life. If it continued to cry, he said, "Poor little motherless thing," nodded mournfully at his sister, and went on tiptoe out of the room. Occasionally he had an old classmate in to supper; they retired to his den, smoking, chatting of their wild academic youth, and sometimes singing *Lauriger Horatius*, his favourite ditty. Aunt Mary, down in the drawing-room, hears the *pocula* and *oscula* trolled out with great effect; she tells Mrs. Malstrem that Horace gets such comfort out of his Latin! "Hod," says Mrs. Malstrem, old playmate and relative, "ought really to have studied a profession. He is such a scholar!" — Horace knew everything, from the inside history of fami-



lies to the times when principal trains arrived in the city. His wife had died when he was eight-and-twenty ; now, in 1865, he looked hardly a day older. He was a keen judge of sermons, preferring those of his rector, the full-bodied Dr. Blessys, with whom his relations both as friend and as vestryman were very close indeed.—“What a tact and facility the doctor has!” exclaims Horace to his companion of the moment, as they walk homeward up the street. “We were speaking incidentally the other day, the doctor and I, of canvasbacks and green peas; not much room for theology there, you will say. Ah, but the doctor was equal to it. He closed our discussion about a rich man’s limit for luxuries, with a wave of his hand: ‘*Meats*, my dear Horace,’ said he, ‘*meats for the belly, and the belly for meats . . . and one Lord over all!*’ There were no ladies present, of course.”

It was Linsey Cards to whom Horace imparted this valuable instance of theological tact. It was not the sort of conversation which the banker used to have with Eliot; but, if less stimulating, it was far less disturbing. Bitter against Philadelphia in the old days, he now began to see a great light; suppose he were taken into the fold?—At any rate, Horace took him into the Pomegranate Street house to see the parade; and Cards was glad. Arrived in



the square of sanctity, the two were now going by the open window of Mr. Huntington Moonby. A bachelor he, one of our few clubmen out and out, with large head, flabby cheeks, staring eyes, and a shrewd, crooked, sniffling, swollen, boiled sort of nose: he had the right to be as ugly as he pleased (even, as that charming French woman put the phrase, to "abuse his privileges of ugliness"), and as surly; for his ancestor was next friend to Penn. A flag hung from the highest window of the house, although his own ruddy face was decoration enough. And of him, too, Mrs. Willy Candoe said things. At the play, conformably with his unbroken bibulous habit, he always sat at the end of a line; and Mrs. Willy compared his face there to an illuminated initial. "It's the only thing about him that smacks of theology; of course, he is medieval enough. But, then, it spoils the classical suggestion, doesn't it, Dolly dear? Otherwise, perfect Silenus. You're just out of school, dear! Do tell a stupid old woman what *ought* to be Mr. Moonby's botanical name!" — She talked, too, of the poor man's "bovine chuckle"; and once asked him to help her organize a Sunday-school in the new Unitarian church. But Mrs. Willy was always talking like that; and who cared? Not Moonby. "She's crazy, — that's what she is," he said.



His emphasis of the unusual sort was always attained by such a sentence, without oath of any sort, spoken very slowly. Otherwise he swore profusely. Speaking of this inseparable bond between Moonby and his oath, Mrs. Willy once declared that he shared one characteristic with the "meek mountain lamb" in Walter Scott's pretty poem about the Helvellyn wanderer: Mr. Moonby would "draw his last sob by the side of his damn."

"Mornin', Hod, blank ye!" — Horace looked up and smiled. "Ah, Hunt, good morning, good morning." He waved an affable salute.

Moonby's club friend, a horses' man, not very happy with ladies, asked who was the big chap with Hoddy.

"Dash my wig," says Moonby, cocking his wicked, half-senile eye.... "Why, yes. I've got him. It's that blank banker. Used to live here; errand boy; Heighs; Eliot. — Eh?"

The clubman knew now.

"Cards, by blank! You know what they say about him in Third Street? Pellett the broker told me this man was a comer. He doesn't fool with dead ducks like the old-fashioned bankers; he runs things from the inside. Corporations are the thing now, Pellett says, and this Cards banks for the corporations, — gets money for 'em over the pond, and has



all kinds of influence down in Washington. He's coming."

Mr. Moonby went into an unwonted period of cogitation, and came out of it with resolve upon his face. "Billy," he said solemnly, "every dog has his day. Let's look up this dog. He'll be at Cousin Nathan's. Come along."

Horace had stopped more than once to point out the glories of Pomegranate Street, and was therefore overtaken just as he opened his outer door; he made his introductions with all his suave felicity of phrase, and now paused a moment over the great *Salve* cut in the marble floor,—his own idea. Of course he told the story about his country cousin, which Moonby, who stuck to old friends, greeted with honest laugh and oath. To the sound of this merriment, our four patriots entered the inner mansion and laid down their hats. It was a warm, delicious day; in that early dawn of the peace-years one felt in truth the bliss to be alive; and these four merry gentlemen had chosen the better part. To be dead down yonder in Virginia was a mistake.... Horace was explaining how he kept his hat-brush and street gloves in one of the large chairs with hinged seat, while his father had privilege of the other; pausing to take in this lucid exposition at the full, Cards noted the two doors on his right, leading into



the great drawing-room, and on his left a smaller apartment, presumably dedicated to the muses. Books he saw through the doorway, and a writing-table, and the fireplace in vacation dress ...and something more. In a chair that was drawn back from the window sufficiently to escape all prying looks from without, but with good command of the street, sat a woman quite alone, waiting for the soldiers.... Cards shivered just a shiver's fraction; then drew himself up, and entered at Horace's heel the noisy room on the right. Noisy, or cheerful: as you will. Mrs. Malstrem was there, and Mr. Malstrem, and the rector, and sundry others, — a merry little set of friends who had played together, been confirmed together, gone to school, to dancing-class, come "out" or into business together; so thoroughly one were they that they almost thought in concert, like Alice's wonderland folk, and made conversation a kind of gregarious soliloquy. To them Horace presented his "friend, Mr. Linsey Cards, — the friend of... precisely...." It kept him turning right and left like a joint of meat on a turnspit; but Cards could do this sort of thing now. The only mark of the old beast upon him was a shade of superfluous ceremony. He has at last made his final bow at the final name from Horace, and is about to take a chair by the side



of Nathan West, choosing a safe phrase about shipping interests meant to swing the conversation quite clear of Virginia and the evil days, a subject of which Mrs. Malstrem is evidently overfond, when a silence and a holding of breath all about him check his design. By instinct he turns toward the doorway which he just entered. Kriemhild Eliot has come from the library, and is walking straight up to him; she puts out her hand. "I am glad to find you," is her quiet word. "You ought to have come to us long ago."

Dr. Blessys once confided to Horace that the most difficult parochial task he had ever undertaken was his visit of condolence to Kriemhild Eliot after her return from Virginia. "Her mood, my dear Horace, was extraordinary. She could not have been callous, — callous: oh, no, indeed! But her feelings were under such restraint. No handkerchief.... She fixed her eyes on my face. I spoke of the means offered by our blessed church to comfort those in affliction.... I spoke of good works, of your dear sister Mary. But as I approached the actual loss, — the Colonel's awful death, you know, — well, Horace, I hesitated. Horace, I think I was embarrassed!" — Horace ventured to doubt *that*. — "Well, I felt that both tact and... yes, tact, advised me not to touch the subject at all.



I did not." And Horace remarked for his part that Kriemhild's calm had been something terrible. Mrs. Willy Candoe called it "uncanny" and quite "fifteenth-century Italian." To members of his own family, Dr. Blessys, who felt snubbed, called it pagan, — "or worse."

Now it was Cards who faced this calm of the widow, looking at her, as his wont was with all men, eye to eye. Yet it was his gaze that fell; he let her carry the situation for him, answering her questions about his doings and abidings for the past two years, while shrewd old West, the only person in the family who seemed to understand her, made a diversion by talk with Moonby and his friend. Then a bomb exploded.

"Mr. Cards is an old friend of mine, and he was the dearest friend of my husband. I wish him to watch the soldiers with me from the library window, — a few minutes. We shall come back afterward. You will excuse us, Grandpa? Mr. Cards!" — And they went out. I, by the way, had been asked to bear her company; but I was in the show itself, and so the lots fell upon Cards. It was interesting. Comment, of course, had no free field in the drawing-room, save in an exclamation or two from the irrepressible Mrs. Malstrem. — "That isn't *mourning*, Cousin Nathan. What is it?" she said.



“Why, it’s Kriemhild’s way, and she shall have it. — Hunt, come sit near me; there’s room, and Lily can see through you.”

Mrs. Malstrem missed her retort, for behold the parade!

A noise of hurrying feet swept down the block. More little boys swarmed up more trees; the local policeman grew very nervous. Then came a squad of his brethren, clearing the way; and then the first of the military bands, loud, miscellaneous of note, clangorous. Then at last, like a dull, persistent undertone, was heard the tramp of marching men.... The Army of the Potomac.

It breaks up my comedy, that tramp of marching men. I can laugh with all the cynics in my bookcases at all the doings of life, general and individual, now and from all time, only not at that monotony of our old marching ranks, marching hither and thither at the whim of fools, marching to wounds and death, and to their last triumph over a noble foe.... Here Thalia leaves us, and her sterner sister takes the word. But I have no skill to say it in however humble echo.

So, in their own way, felt the watchers in the library, listening to the chatter from across the hall until even its careless note was silenced at the nearing of those thin, worn ranks. High



officers came now, some looking straight over their horses' heads, and some saluting left and right; and the rank and file marched by. You never hear their tramp, as I do in my dreams. On they came, through rows of yelling men and women, with that dogged, even step which had carried them through the Wilderness, with that persistent tread rallying from rebuff upon rebuff, steadfast through defeat, pestilence, and despair, stolid tramp, tramp, of the union volunteers, which saved you all.... Cards felt his pulses beat heavily; he dared not look at Kriemhild. Out of the other room came Moonby's rasping voice. "What a dirty-lookin' lot. Where's my substitute, I wonder? And yours, Hod?" Regiment after regiment went by. Straight-sitting and silent, Kriemhild suddenly yielded to an irresistible shudder, then leaned forward more intent than ever upon the marching ranks. What she saw was a tattered flag, with blur of battle-autographs upon its folds, held proudly aloft by a mere handful of men. Steadily they stepped along, the Bay State soldiers, and led with them, saddled and bridled but unriden, their murdered colonel's favourite horse. Cards knew and gazed. But the woman at his side did more, rising in a kind of salute, and standing there, so it seemed, erect, proud, unmoved; but as Cards too rose, and stood by her, even



her reserve gave way : she began, though never so slightly, to tremble, and one hard sob broke from her lips. Cards put out his arm, and she leaned heavily upon it ; but still stood there silent until the last man of that whole brigade had gone by. "Thank you," she then said to Cards. "You will excuse me now ? I forgot this. And you will come soon — soon — again ?"

She passed steadily out, down the hall, and up the distant stairs. Cards, closing the library door softly behind him, paused a moment or two ; then went to join the group in the drawing-room.



## II

### MALLEM HAEC MULIER ME AMET QUAM DII

CARDS had always led a decent life, and of late he had been, whether for his virtues or not, very lonely. Coming back to New York from Virginia, he went grimly to work. The tragic death of Eliot hit him hard; but when the wound began to heal and the scar began to take its permanent form, he found, as everybody finds, that memory of the dead, however tender and loving, differs palpably from affection for the man in flesh and blood. Loyalty to the living fills one's heart; loyalty to the dead leaves spaces. There is now room in the inn. Feel your threnody; write it down and publish it, — by all means publish it: you still have a welcome for good fellows who are not ghosts at all. Cards never dodged his own thoughts. Remembering this, and remembering that he had no illusions, as he would call them, about spirits who hover above our mortality and hands that shall be clasped beyond death, — that he saw nothing behind him but a dear memory, nothing before him but a life out of



which he was to make what he could, once for all, — you can understand how things not to be considered while Eliot was alive came before him unrebuked now Eliot was dead. One thought, however, one shape, he hardly yet dared to view boldly and call by name; although looking and naming would both come in time. And the time came as he paused in the hall between library and drawing-room in old West's house that morning of the parade.

In the evening, you may remember, he was bidden to sup with Nathan's estimable family. They liked him. He had three qualities which win, — good presence, the assurance of bodily and mental strength, the promise of success. He passed the test and took his unwritten certificate; was invited to come again. Soon he was coming in and out of the house as he pleased; they had adopted him; and his general position was now as sure as if one had granted him an equal date with the Andes and the Ararats, old Philadelphia families. And of the group which gathered in West's house, his mainstay and social comforter soon came to be garrulous, pretty, plump Mrs. Malstrem. She was hot on the trail of Cards's matrimonial future, and undertook to groom him for the race. It was her vocation. She was a devoted wife and mother respectively to Ossian Malstrem the



elder and the younger; what such devotion of a mother can accomplish is writ large in our great railway man's career. Another son, Eleu Loro Malstrem, named after rich cousin Eleu, is now a poet of some repute. And you know Morven Malstrem, of course, who is in no business save that of a rich wife. But at the time of which I write, both Ossian, Jr., and Eleu Loro were unmitigated nuisances; Morven was not born; and Mrs. Malstrem was known as the pleasantest hostess and chaperon possible when nubile youth was convened and the two boys had been put to bed.

One early summer night in Pomegranate Street she took supper along with Cards, and came with him back from the dining room into the great double parlour; through the French door at the rear she led him out upon a little vine-covered porch, and the buzzing crowd — for Nathan had a hospitable board — was left behind in the drawing-room. From the midst of the trailing vines of the trellis near by, she picked a rose and held it out toward the banker. It looked like rank flirtation; it was nothing of the sort; and her own husband, gazing idly through the doorway, nudged Horace heartily in the ribs. "I wonder who it is now," he queried; and Horace was not sure. "We can safely leave it all to Lily," was his sage reply.



"The last week in June, Mr. Cards! We are all moving out into the country to-morrow. This rose reminds me of it; what does it remind *you* of?"

"Well, I think mainly of dear old Mrs. Heigh. I was out there yesterday. They were always kind to me; and you know her rose garden."

"Her roses are no better than mine, which you shall see next week at Roadside, Mr. Cards. And it is very nice of you to think of old Mrs. Heigh when you see a rose; but ... Here, take this one, and tell me what it says to you. Hasn't it a message?"

Cards was a trifle disconcerted. The husband pestered him about stocks; here was the wife full cry on a flirtation; and he had grown pretty wary in this regard, as all successful men of money do. Mrs. Malstrem laughed out.

"You are a foolish man, do you know? Don't hold the rose as if it were a foundling baby! Take its message, — but not from *me*, stupid. ... I beg your pardon, — but you *are* stupid."

"Very," said Cards, and laughed. She laughed merrily back.

"*Now* we are off," she said. "And listen. The message of the rose is this. First of all, the war is over. You knew that? No, pardon me, you did not. Well, it says the war is over, and we are pasting down all the old pages with the



names of those poor, dead soldiers, — not forgetting them, you know, but pasting down the leaf. You listen ? ”

“ Attentively ! ”

“ Well, the rose says that. It says you must board near us in the country. Hunt Moonby will give you the particulars. Cousin Nathan has built his fine new house there. It is good air, — ‘salubrious,’ don’t you know ? — and a nice neighbourhood. Spring water, and plenty of old shade. Old shade. — Do you love your neighbour, Mr. Cards ? ”

“ Sometimes.”

“ Well, we *must*. The Bible says so. And I am going to choose a ... some neighbours for you. I told you the place was close to Cousin Nathan’s ? Well ! Now let us drop the subject of your big self, Mr. Cards. We must not be personal, must we ? And the boarding out our way is settled, isn’t it ? Good. Now one thing more, — as I say, to change the subject. Poor Kriemhild is so lonely ; we are all afraid of her. If you could only persuade *her* that the war is over ; could you ? Do try. Try *now*. Take the rose with you. — And come in fast ! My husband is grinding his teeth in rage, and I positively cannot have a duel between you ! ”

In point of fact, Mr. Ossian Malstrem greeted them, as they entered, with his amiable grin, and



an incisive, "Hallo, — flirtin' in the moonlight, eh?" uttered in tones that echoed his own boiler-works. Cards laughed and went straight upon his new errand, while the chubby matron fairly beamed with delight. "I'll do it, Oss," she said. — "I don't know what it is, Lily; but I know you'll do it," was the admiring answer of her spouse. The piano was going now, and young people dropped in; Horace's daughters, as the elder Weller would say, were "wery conformable," and that big room was known to be the coolest spot in Philadelphia. Thither came Mrs. Barrill Jones, who was all right, and Mrs. Scandent, who was not quite all right, having lately moved into Walnut Street from somewhere uptown. But she was rich; Scandent was in iron, and gave huge sums to our church. Thither came even Moonby, deserting his club; and his great growl went audibly about, triumphing over all conversation except the boiler-works voice of Ossian Malstrem. The Malstremes, every one knows, are of Swedish descent, very old indeed, and long ago married into the Penn-Gwynne family, whence a pleasant combination of English, Celtic, and supposedly Scandinavian names. Ulric Galahad Malstrem, first cousin to Ossian, head of the house and the boiler-works, now lay stricken with some mysterious malady.

"How is Ulric, Oss?" asked Nathan West.



"Ulric," roared Malstrem, as mournfully as might be, and with a kind of resolute melancholy, "Ulric does not seem to recuperate, I am sorry to say,—does not seem to recuperate."

Horace hoped that Cards had noted this excellent word; but Cards was talking with Kriemhild Eliot, who for the first time in her widowhood remained now with the evening guests.

"Dear me, no," said Mrs. Malstrem. "Do you know, Cousin Nathan, Ulric has never been the same since Sally Ann died? The tour in Europe did him no good. The doctors can't make him out."

"No," and Mr. Malstrem closed out the account. "No, Ulric does not seem to recuperate;" then, turning a point or two, he caught the gaze of Mr. Huntington Moonby. He grinned, and with the same voice in which Ulric did not seem to recuperate, saluted the clubman. "Hallo, Hunt," he said very wittily. "Hallo, you loafer!"

"I'm not a loafer, am I? Eh, Lily? I toil and I spin, Lily,—and you don't: the Bible says you don't! eh?"

"No,—but you will be cut down and cast into the ov..."

"Lily, Lily! the doctor!" and Horace pointed to the rector, easy in a comfortable chair with a fan and Aunt Mary and one or two more of his adorers.



“Well, Lily,” said Moonby, who roared with approval of this ill-flavoured jest, “you know my standing offer. Kill off Oss, and I’ll marry you.”

And Mrs. Malstrem giggled softly, turning to her husband, and dropping her voice that the doctor might not hear, “Oh, Oss, live forever!” — People didn’t talk like that in Boston; but who cared?

And now Harry Harpy got some new music for one of the girls to sing, Harry Harpy, a Princeton College graduate and son of old Joshua Harpy of the dry-goods house of Harpy, Peedle, and Dugong, famous and ancient firm. Then came something sentimental... *Soft o’er the fountain*: such rot—do you know it? As vile, poor stuff as ever was; but somehow I now and then ask girls to sing it to me for auld lang syne. They laugh at me.... Then there was more talk, with *ho, ho*, from Moonby and *ha, ha* from Malstrem; and chatter, chatter, everywhere: I say, it was not Boston.

Kriemhild Eliot was conversing quietly with Cards. She swept her eye over the scene. “This is a fascinating existence to which I am coming back, is it not? You tell me that we both have a precious memory of Waltham’s death and what he died for. Well! He fought and died for the



God of his fathers, — let us say, represented by yonder noble cleric, who has just asked Aunt Mary where grandpa gets his port. Waltham died for home and fireside: consider the intelligent young Harpy and my cousin, bread-and-butter in the flesh. He died for our nation and its great future, — for Mr. Malstrem's boiler business and that desolate man Moonby's income."

"But he died for all of us, and our welfare; for you and me...."

"What do you mean by that?"

Cards pulled up, overwhelmed with mortification. He had not meant to mean anything, though the phrase could mean everything... and she despised him....

No, she did not. He ventured to look at her, and her expression was that of one who has a problem to solve, but is not yet ready to state it. She turned to him abruptly. "I should like to talk that over with you another time," she said, to the utter mystification of Cards. "At any rate, how can I stagnate in this set?" A remark or two, then a query coupled with her name, sped now into this quiet corner from bolder souls among the friends of her youth, who took heart at the sight of her in questionable shape. Was she not to be one of them again? So, now, these daring conversational voyages of discovery came across the gulf of



long respect for her reticence ; but to little good. She answered briefly, coldly, as if Mrs. Siddons were asked to play in farce ; then turned again to Cards with noticeable change of manner, with touch of sympathy in look and voice. She essayed woman's oldest and surest device in taming man, making him talk about himself. Cards fell easily ; his guard was down ; and he told of rebuff, struggle, triumph. "I don't understand why men give in," he concluded. "When one is wise, one tries for the attainable, and, if one is brave, one gets it at whatever cost. I...but how many I's have you heard from me already ? What an egoist !"

"Only egoists, in the good sense, amount to anything. I like to hear you. And so you set your mind on an object, and you get what you intend ? Well, that is life. There is no other good thing, is there ? No. And am *I* alive ?"

Cards hoped she would soon find opportunities for such vital efforts ; and as for being alive ! He could not tell her that her beauty, clearer, stronger than ever before, summed up a thousand lives. Perhaps he looked it, though ; and perhaps she understood.

"Will you help me gain some of my ends when I find them ?"

Cards was absolutely at her service.

"Haven't you, yourself, some overwhelming



purpose to which you are going to subordinate everything else? That must be the real life...."

Cards, pausing to let the seconds pass, heavy and long, looked at her, paused again, and said at last: "Yes."

"Why, that is right, indeed." She smiled exquisitely. "Perhaps I too, and one day, shall find *my* overwhelming and absorbing quest.... We shall compare notes, then."

Cards knew nothing to say, perfectly aware, amid his wonder over these extraordinary confidences, that what he most wished to say must not be said. She rose. "Well, you are coming out into the country, I hear. I am glad of that. It will seem like the old times. And when you talk to me, have no fear of mentioning Waltham; with *you* I am glad to speak about him, you know. But we have talked long enough here and now; and you must go over to my grandfather and amuse him.... He likes you, and I want him to like you more."

Pacing slowly back to his hotel an hour later, Mr. Linsey Attila Cards thought over all this intently, and came to two results. In the first place, she had singled him out from the rest; had spoken as if he were her next friend. True, there was no touch of sentiment; and such frank friendship is not what men wish in these matters. But he was at least the object of her rare gra-



ciousness, and, it would seem, the only object. The other consideration was even more positive, evident: this woman was not the woman who had married Waltham Eliot. — If he had been an author, and lived in these days, Cards would have sealed his meditations with the remark that there must be psychological detective stories yet unwritten, and Comedies of Errors to be staged from the resources of dual personality. But what was this new Kriemhild? A woman sorrow-ripe for passion of new experience and noblest uses of life? Or was she now Our Lady of the Snows, and her friendship a chapel on the highest Alp? — Cards did not care much for chapels. But he knew beyond all doubt that he cared everything for her. And the old phrase, remembered from some college recitation years before, kept sounding in his thought and in his dreams: *I would rather have this woman love me than have the gods love me.*



### III

TEN years had changed our countryside in no small degree. People came out for the hot months, not single spies as in 1855, but by battalions. Country places of an almost English character sprang up here and there; trains were more frequent; and the suburban life, now perennial and almost preponderant, was then at least a summer fact. The Malstrem's rented that house with the Virginia creeper, where once dear old Miss Patty used to sit so erect with the "cape" on her shoulders,—or was it a "mantilla"?—and smile in her stately way as my Uncle Charles came slowly up for his afternoon call. Now, as one walked by the place of a July evening, one heard the roar of Malstrem, the chatter of his wife, the shrill bark of Ossian, Jr., cutting midway into adult conversation, and the hum and buzz of young folk flirting and talking about the lawn. This Young America, scarce come to amorous age, as you must know, had a new smile after Appomattox, just as the Germans had a glorious smile after Sedan, and our modern youth a tremendous smile after the great battle of Santiago. But then it was the Appo-



mattox smile. The young fellows of 1865 had grown to manhood amid all the fifing and drumming of war time, though mainly not of the actual ranks; they wore, I remember, a white waistcoat of some stuff called "Turkish towel-ing," shaggy, with an enormous gold watch-chain and dangling locket stretched right across; representatives of their golden brotherhood gathered in some force, on the warm July nights, to meet coeval young women at this house of the late Miss Patty, now of very blessed memory and very limited example. A mile or so down the road was a boarding-house, once some bankrupt body's country place; there, for the price of it and by the care of its keeper, only the better sort could abide, and there were Moonby and Cards. "You won't see me at the Branch for another month, Cards," confided the former gentleman to his comrade at table. "The pace is too fast for your Uncle Huntington to stand more than four weeks. And I know where to stop! Look at me—forty-five, and sound as a dollar." Then followed the buck's familiar hygienic rules, interesting, but not to be quoted here.—Cards said that was certainly a sensible rule; and when were we to start for the Malstrems?—They were going to drive there in Moonby's dog-cart at a decent interval after supper. Moonby was not a pedestrian.



An evening at the Malstrem place was not easily forgotten ; it was, as I have said, the nocturnal Rialto of our suburban set, old and young. Cards had now for some weeks kept dropping in to join the more sober of the group ; and often found Kriemhild there, who accompanied her grandfather or even her Uncle Horace on this harmless pilgrimage to a place with which she had so many associations of her youth, her dear old aunts, her courtship and early love. On the piazza these quiet folk gathered, here in shadow of the old-fashioned white pillars, there in broad moonlight, — host and hostess, rector Blessys on his long vacation, Horace, sometimes old West, Moonby — who was vegetating, as he said, for an animal diet later at the Branch, — Kriemhild, and Cards. Under cover of ponderous jokes indicating marital jealousy of the acutest form, Malstrem now made subtle pleasure for Cards by insinuations of a possibility which Mrs. Malstrem directly prophesied as fact and everybody discussed with interest. Moonby said it would be a dashed good thing all around ; and his protection of the banker was marked to the degree of flattery. To-night the young people were either scattered over the lawn, trying to play the new game of croquet by moonlight, or else they dallied in a pleasant gloom near the drawing-room piano ; the elders, as I told you, chatted pleasantly on



the piazza. Cards, indeed, could not fail to feel a thorough satisfaction with his position. Out yonder in the road he had stood years ago, a superfluity; negligible everywhere, and supremely so in the eyes of young Kriemhild West. Now he sat by her side, welcome; and not only the little group of her own set accepted him, but powerful names of the Philadelphia world were content to be written down near his own. For here, to-night, auxiliary to the piazza party, were men like Colonel Davis, and Felix Jappette, and Honoré Freaksmith, the new poet and dabbler in criticism. As for Aaron Breitstein, whose grandfather had turned Christian and married into our set, Cards could almost patronize him. How the old Cards would once have spent his satire on this group, talking them over in Bostonese with Eliot; and how suavely, softly, thankfully, he now accepted them as part and parcel of his new inheritance, adjutants and applauders of him in his designs for a vast House of Cards! He was pleased with them all. Colonel Davis had never served in the army, *douce* man, but bore his title with an air even better than military. A widower of vast estates, he shot ducks from his blind at Rehoboth, and sent pairs of them to many a friend, sign of autumn as sure as the almanac. He blanked his eyes with men and blessed his heart with women, and all together



was as near the red-faced, fox-hunting English squire as American manhood, destitute of fogs and foxes, can attain. Sometime matrimony, great riches, and a permanent rural life differentiated him from Moonby; he deplored his friend's sedentary habits and aversion from shooting, prophesying woe; but to see him punch that growling, grinning sinner in the chest, whisper something hoarsely, and roar out a heaven-shaking *Eh?* — to see Moonby screw up his face in appreciation of the whisper, then chuckle and cackle and roll his lobster eyes as retort courteous to the roar, — was to see two very pretty gentlemen. Felix Jappette was an amateur artist and had studied in Paris; Moonby and the Colonel enjoyed his pleasant talk about models; and everybody liked to have one of his pictures, which he never sold. I remember getting into trouble with him over a rural scene he painted for my maternal uncle; it was full of cows, and the cows' legs wouldn't come out even; so I called the chief animal Felix's Leap-Year Cow. And he said, go to a Quaker for art! — I have had troubles all my life, you see, from this critical instinct; perhaps they have told you how angry Shadgood, the epic poet, was with me for laughing at his *Mexicad*.... But Cards, at this period, was not critical; he even defended me warmly for my ascetic way, already deplored by



the neighbourhood. I kept pretty close to our old house, where my mother was now a hopeless invalid, — our old house, no longer holding its primacy. Nathan West's new mansion made us look like a farm. "Oh, John drops in now and then," said Mrs. Malstrem to Cards's inquiry, "and we dearly love to have him — if he'd stop harping on old General Charles and Aunt Patty, and if he would not be so sarcastic about politics. Oss gets right mad, — mad, I must say; and Cousin Nathan doesn't like it. John says Lee was the greatest general of the war, — think of that! Why, it's treason. And he reads and grubs about the old place. He's too sarcastic. When Cousin Nathan had his housewarming for the new mansion yonder and they started a visitors' book — quite English, you know, — John made up some verses that Felix Jappette and lots of people said were impudent, and wrote them over his name.

"Inhabit nobly, little build;  
 To climb is better than to cling;  
 Rejoice not that the cup is filled,  
 But seek, though still in vain, the spring.

"What does *that* mean? Horace says it's impious and Emersonian ... Oh, — and Kriemhild? John? He's thrown things away! She'd like him, of course, to come here, and to see her more;



but she says John doesn't approve of her now."

"He did once," interpolates the banker, and cannot help looking a trifle anxious.

"That is *all over*. I know it. Don't worry about *that*." — So Mrs. Malstrem, consoling delightfully.

Cards, therefore, sat on the Roadside piazza, this night in late July, at ease with all his world, and not at all afraid of John Heigh, not afraid, even, as I must admit that John Heigh was afraid, to the very border of insanity, of dead men's shoes. Perhaps I may say for myself that I was more than puzzled at the comparison of this Kriemhild, imperious mourner, with the Kriemhild of long ago. I searched old philosophies, brooded, moped; but what had made me dazed and mystified had made Cards bold.

The men smoke placidly. Horace has introduced the topic of culture. New America, he opines, must love its book, buy its paintings, patronize literature and art. Mrs. Malstrem laments that Oss's dear papa, who had old-fashioned notions, set the son so early to work at boilers and neglected things of the mind. "If you had studied Latin, Oss, like Hod, you wouldn't have betted that box of Key West Parugas with Felix that Shakespeare wrote *Riche-lieu*." And Oss growled.



"Is this one of the famous Shakespeare Par-tagas, Oss?" queried the rector. "It's good, anyway!"

Horace covered a threatened conjugal discussion over the good taste of Mrs. Malstrem's allusion—the rector, of course, was privileged—by a return to his topic. Malstrem, who always closed out a matter in his own way, effected a pleasant retreat by offering another cigar to Dr. Blessys.

"Thank you, dear Oss. Not a second, delicious as they are,—not a second. Horace's great namesake, you know, says we must cleave to the golden mean: *aurea mediocritas*,—eh, Horace?"

"There, you see!" sighs the hostess. "Here are you, Doctor, and Mr. Cards, and Horace, all scholars and college men,—and Hunt, too. You are *half* a college man, aren't you, Hunt?"

Mr. Moonby, who had fallen by the academic wayside through a decree of separation, rare enough at our dear university, but fairly forced upon an indulgent provost, spoke tersely of his detachment from ambitions of this sort; but Horace, placating him with a "Quite so, Hunt," and a sympathetic look, proceeded to animadvert very feelingly upon consolations of the intellectual life. "In point of fact," he said, "as our good Hunt knows, that disposition runs in our family, much as I have disgraced..."



“O Hod!”

“Well, Lily, I won’t make the mistake of false modesty.”

“There is not a better read man than you, Horace, in the state of Pennsylvania!” — Felix Jappette stands by his friends.

“Well, my grandfather was that, at any rate,” said Horace. “He was an enormous reader. Down in the old library on Fifth Street they have his collection by itself; Jones calls it very wittily the ‘West Corner,’ though in point of fact it’s southeast.”

“I sometimes wish,” said Felix, “that Jones would write down his good things....”

“But then, grandfather didn’t go to college,” continued Horace, “and there it is.”

He appealed about him; and all except Kriemhild, who was gazing over the road at soft outlines of hill and wood, her face like some exquisite glimpse of a statue, only warm, instinct with purpose impossible to divine, — all were agreed that there it is.

“Every now and then I see a scrap of Latin; for instance, ‘sweet and decorous it is for the country to die.’” Cards started a little at this, but his cynical smile expired in birth. “How often *that* has consoled me in war time, when... Kriemhild, dear, pardon me!... Oh, the Latin sticks. I was graduated third in my class, Cards,



—that is what all this fuss is about, quite unnecessary fuss.”

Cards said, “Oh, no!” and Horace responded with “Luck, then, it was, —pure luck.” And he went on: “I remember that Professor Beetle wrote a lot of the salutatory I had to give in Latin. Let’s see. It began — *Quanto gaudio debemus*, ‘with how great joy we ought...’ Now, bless me, if I remember any more *what* we ought to do with great joy!”

“Take a drink!” suggested Moonby. And laughter rewarded the devil’s advocate in this canonization of classics, waking up the rector, who started and said “Quite so! By all means! Hah!” ignorant of the sentiment he thus backed. And with the movement came other diversion; croquet-players, baffled by imperfect light and the shadows, came in for a song at the piano. And again Harry Harpy, late of Princeton College, husband-to-be of Dolly West, sang something very comic indeed. He asked first, “Did you ever see a fly upon a wall?” repeating it rapidly a dozen times, with terrific jingle of the piano; then, “Did you ever see a wall upon a fly, wall-upon-a-fly?” and so on with wittiest distortions. For an innocent song Moonby thought this very amusing; “damn good, ain’t it?” he whispered hoarsely to Cards. But Mrs. Malstrem was whispering in the other ear. “Horace,” she said, “has some



vestry business with Oss and the doctor. I've told her. *Take her home.*" Before Cards could rightly appreciate how all the machinery had been moved, he had left the babble and jingle and futility of that piazza group, and was walking silent in the moon-flooded night by the silent Kriemhild. She was no longer in black; Cards did not know the compromise, but he knew what new vitality sat superbly upon the exquisite features, upon the noble graces of her form, her poise, her motion. — Silent both remained for some time, a state of things not unusual for two clever persons who have sat out hours of vacuous merriment and gossip, above all, hours of Horace.

"How my Uncle Horace can bore," she remarked evenly at length; "and how copious he is! That stuff about Latin, — and to you, a Harvard man! Uncle Horace couldn't read a page of Caesar to save his immortal... culture."

"Oh, your uncle is not so bad as that. I like him. He is so thoroughly the gentleman...."

"Why not?"

— Cards bit his lip.

"Now let us talk of something worth while."

"With pleasure. And it shall be...?"

But she did not answer at once. Finally, in a tone part hesitation, part pride, and all intensity, she said, looking up and about her, "It was along this road I ran ten years ago to try to stop



the duel. You know who was with me. You don't know though how he laughed and talked. 'Why not let them fight it out, like gentlemen?' That was one chivalrous suggestion. Then afterward, at our house, his remarks about *you*. I thought him a very noble and superior person. And I agreed with him that...that your ideals were not chivalrous."

"I knew it."

"And I hope you know what I think now — of him, of you. Then years, years, and at last the awful night, and the distracted morning. ... You were so helpful, so practically helpful. Grandpa and I talk of it — often. You did so much, — you did everything. I said to myself, when there was at last a self to say it to, that here was a man whom I had scorned for stopping a fight and saving lives; and there — oh, my friend, if you could have stopped and saved *then*! — and there, riding off to the enemy, a black traitor, was the high-minded officer and gentleman who believed in the fine old feudal settlement of affairs of honour, — the Virginia cavalier, who came up behind his friend's back and struck him dead."

"Well, — true." Cards coughed nervously. "Still, one must try to be fair. John Heigh, you know...."

"John Heigh, much as I like him, is a mad-



man about this. He tried to defend that murderer — *defend* him! I forbade him ever to name the man to me again! We had a scene.... I am sorry.... But...”

“Quite so. Heigh is fanatical now about all the southerners, — and has his troubles for it. But, then, after all... Those negroes, you remember, said there were traces of a real fight, face to face; and if the rain...”

Linsey Cards, my lad, that is not the way!

“Mr. Cards,” came coldly, “you men forgive very easily, and are more easily convinced, — when your pockets are not concerned....”

Cards murmured apologies, protest....

“No, no. Let us not palter with the thing in this silly way. I thought you of sterner stuff. Those negroes! Don’t you know he was of the county, a Clayton? No, it was murder, cold and deliberate; and you all said so then, and you know it now. Our dear cousin, if you insist on the relationship, gave a beautiful illustration of his theories in 1863. Can we not let him feel how we appreciate it?... Mr. Cards, I can’t keep up this sarcasm.... My heart is bleeding. Is there no justice, — no justice, — for me, for us all, and against him?”

Cards had often heard that all women are subject to a hysterical obsession which calls imperatively for the soothing ministration of a



strong personality, preferably a man's, to heal and calm.

"My dear Mrs. Eliot," he began, "I don't say that we can forgive Clayton, though I am bound to tell you that it would be better for us if we knew all the facts; but we can forget him...."

"Forget?"

Cards never met just that note in any human voice before or since. How he would have answered it, he could not say; for just then the sharp trot of a horse and the click of rapid wheels was audible close behind them; the odours of a strong cigar floated by; and presently Silenus Moonby was speaking at their ears.

"Get down and open the seat," he growled to his groom, who was quick to transform the dog-cart into an affair for four. "Drive ye both home," he went on affably. He made no jest; and indeed he took the whole thing seriously, stamping it with his approval. He had been awed by the widowhood of Kriemhild, and as a connection of the family had curtly forbidden from the start all jokes about the frustrated nuptials, showing an unprecedented reticence on the subject. "If you want oil," he explained at his club, "dig where there's oil. This ain't a jokin' matter; family, too. — Your deal, Jim."



Now he found Cards an admirable solution of the case; and he intended to be on the sunny side. He had heard great men of railroading and finance speak of Cards with a kind of adoration; that settled the thing for Moonby. And it was with unusual dignity that he now displayed himself, touching no trivial themes. He made a broad and general apology for the Malstrems and their deplorable lack of *retenue*. "They talk too confounded much," he said. "There's Oss, banging away at you about stocks. It ain't decent. And Lily, — well, she's witty and nice; but *she* talks too much. Some people can't hold their tongues. — Well, Kriemhild, here's your step. Thank ye, Cards...."

Cards said good-bye on the piazza, Moonby waiting, statuesque as might be in his posture, and kindling heaven only knows what number in the series of daily cigars. The groom stood stiff, vigilant; and old Nathan appeared on the scene. "Come to church next Sunday," said Kriemhild, in a low voice, "and drive back with us to dinner." Cards took her hand, held it for the alternative period named by Mr. Browning's gentleman, who assumed, contrariwise to Cards, that all was over; and then left her with her grandfather, who repeated the invitation to dinner on Kriemhild's hint, cordially, and included Moonby, with the usual jocosities which



that old buck always evoked. Cards climbed up to his seat. The moon shone clear upon the fresh gray stone of the house, on the recent shrubbery; it lighted up the old man with his black dress, his snowy hair, and the tall woman who stood close to him in that tender affection which she manifested towards him alone. Cards looked hungrily at her; her superb beauty was revealed best as they parted; and she had seemed to cry to him for sympathy. He could have remained hours in that warm, spicy air, simply gazing at her.... Moonby rose many degrees in the regard of his companion as they drove rapidly home, maintaining a discreet silence, broken only by one or two inquiries directed to his groom and a commonplace to Cards. Moonby, blank it all, was a man of the world; and when it came to character, he knew an oak from a gooseberry bush.



## IV

MOONBY'S reticence, however, was put to a test greater than it could endure, when Cards came to him on the Sunday morning, and announced his desire to attend divine service in the neighbouring church.

"Not goin' to church!" Moonby gasped the words; it was so uncanny. After a late and somewhat erratic breakfast, he sat in the grove before the hotel and watched people depart upon their amiable ecclesiastic follies; they knew no better. His arm-chair was tipped against a tree; his pocket was full of thick, black cigars; a pink-coloured sporting paper was dangling from his hand, and the fresh breeze of July played through his sparse locks. "Not goin' to church?" — He knew but three reasons for such a course: your women could make you; you might be a hypocrite; you might be a fool. Cards was neither hypocrite nor fool, and he had no ... Ah! Moonby's frown relaxed, and a broad grin suffused those coppery features. "Aha!" Silenus bit the end from his cigar, rejected it, and smiled at Cards. He had been taken off his guard; it



was early in the day ; solemnity was impossible. He smiled again, cocking the wicked eye. Cards ought to have been angry. He only smiled back, shook his head at a proffered cigar, and said : " After dinner I'll trade you. I've some fairly fine chaps myself."

" After dinner. Well — that will be at Cousin Nathan's. Well, we'll trade then." He resumed his dignity, and recommended the short cut to church. Cards thanked him.... He knew all the short cuts of this region well enough.

There it was, indeed, with the ivy and the great willow before the door, and the woods behind, our pretty little church. And there was Horace, who led the banker to a pew just in front of Nathan West's family, now a populous and promising affair ; Harry Harpy is with them, and is meditating on an agreeable ceremony in immediate prospect. This neighbourhood of the clan flattered our hero's even pulses, and warmed his heart. He likes Harry Harpy, who is not very far from an ass. He likes everybody. He is prepared even to like the sermon, and fixes his eye respectfully on the meaningless and flabby features of our rural rector, Rev. George Scott Bolto, — rector, alas, for many, many years. All else in the church has been renovated, — pews, chancel, roof, tiles, organ, choir : all is new save Bolto and his sermons.



Yet this Cards, once a plunger in finance and an obstreperous infidel in religion, Conservative Cards, as they now call him, is prepared to take church, Bolto, sermon, all in the day's work. "And I said his opinion was good," or rather his instinct. To my mind there is no sight of these latter days at once so comforting and instructive as the sight of a financier in church. Probably Kriemhild Eliot, who sat behind Cards, felt something of this harmony between the great power of the past and the great power of the present; at any rate she was interested in power, and Cards could well sit as its deputy. Erect in his deference, with his strong head, his firm jaw, marked, cheek and chin, with that bluish tint of dark men who have to shave daily and close, he spelled determination, security, power,—above all, power. She looked at him well, and was content. Suddenly our new choir reminded her that she was worshipping; they chanted in superb style the *Te Deum*; and involuntarily she bowed her head, closed her eyes, and saw a vision flashed from the past. She sat in the old church again, her old self, amid the old surroundings; and the boy from Boston held a prayer-book with her; and it was in the *Te Deum* that they two read ... *When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man....* The book had trembled a little, and she looked at him, and his eyes



were wet. Brave eyes! She saw them last at the good-bye; a few hours, and they were closed forever. Old superstition affirms that if they had opened then, they would have held the picture of the murderer.... Ah, not the *Te Deum*, ye friends there in the new choir; chant us the Commination Service!—When she lifted her head again, those violet eyes of hers held no tears, but were hard and bright. And she still looked at Cards.

As for Mr. Bolto's sermon, not five worshippers heard it through. And the little birds sang east and the little birds sang west; and when the glad surprise of benediction sent us all out into the sweet air in a certain bliss of emigration which made even devout old ladies look wanton, Cards knew of a surety it had been good to join with the respectabilities of this earth in a feat blasphemously declared by Carlyle to be more audacious than beer.

The stars in their courses fought for Cards that day. He drove home with the family; and the publicity of it all, in this our most fashionable suburban summer church, sat like flattery upon his soul's threshold. At dinner, again, he was made to know that he was free of the guild, no longer on probation; the sense of common nutrition, one of the fundamentals in every social process from the very beginning of society



itself, was keener in its delight than that other sense of common worship. Something in the air suggested a tentative adoption of him by this charming group; he was no longer "entertained"; he might belong there, — as Kriemhild chose to settle the affair. His hopes were taken for granted. The House of Cards was building; and its lines were indeed cast in very pleasant places. He thought of its mere physical surroundings, as he had determined them in his drive from church, — deep clover fields, a while ago drenched in dew and now drunk with sunlight; brooks that flowed over stretched and quivering grasses; laden orchards and pleasant groves and the young corn vivid in its early green.... Here he would build his House, and found his sturdy line. Then, in a reaction, came back the sight and the scent of the landscape of his strenuous time, of his college days; those barrens of New England and that salt tang in their air, the rocks, the glimpse of sea. And Eliot's talk came back to him; not only the visions of those college days, but later reminiscence, — how the soldier had cheerily faced hunger and cold, and dangerous visitings of the picket-line in night, in pelting rain, and how he had been wounded in a random skirmish, pitched from a runaway horse into a copse, whence he crawled into a deserted schoolhouse, bound up



his wound with a handkerchief, and so spent a whole Christmas day wondering when and if relief would come.... Cards turned to his neighbour, secure in the conversation all about them. "Just why," he said abruptly, "are we here and all those brave fellows underground?" — Questions like that were not as abrupt in the summer of 1865 as they would seem to us now.

"Ask Mr. Bolto."

"Did he preach on compensation?"

"Do I know? Yes, I think he aimed his pop-gun that way. — But compensation and those brave men underground, as you put it, is really a brave theme. Let us discuss it alone — it hardly goes with this ice-cream — after dinner on the lawn. Bring your cigar." — It sounded almost like the command of one's betrothed; and the thrill of it went along his veins in the track already made by a decorous glass or two of the generous wine.

With whatever regret, Uncle Horace promptly and silently renounced the pleasure of an intelligent after-dinner talk. He saw his duty, sighed, and did it, going off to a piazza corner with the wily Huntington Moonby, now a delighted accessory before the fact in our banker's amorous assault. The rest of them scattered here and there, Cards hardly knew how; and without



fuss of any sort, he found himself in an exquisite privacy of shade — Mrs. Malstrem's roguish "old shade" — and turf and rustic seats, alone with Kriemhild. It was his own omission, however, that he was without the suggested profanation of a cigar. The early afternoon was hot, although a bank of clouds in the western sky promised some relief. In this intensity of brightness and heat spread all about them, they two, despite their protecting shade, seemed to take an almost intolerable clearness of bodily outline and to demand some inward agitation, personal if not tragic offset to the insistence of nature.

"You had something to tell me." Cards dealt rarely in commonplaces. In this glare, beating all about and beyond them like a sea, they were to resume the broken conversation of the cool moonlight walk three days before. Surely no hysterics now! Yet their islanded propinquity had less of the intimate than he had expected; he seemed to talk to her from another world. And she made no direct answer.

"I congratulate you," she said; "late, perhaps, but sincerely."

"On . . . ?"

"Oh, this railroad affair — the bonds — London and Washington. Grandpa was enthusiastic about it. And all since I saw you! It isn't just



money, money, money, they tell me, like the banging on Mr. Malstrem's boilers, but a kind of power, control; so they say. Isn't that right?"

"They flatter me unduly,—but in a way, yes. My plans, you know,"—looking at her with a kind of grave eagerness, he spoke as he would have spoken to no other living person,—“my plans, between you and me ... yes, between you and me ...”

“I appreciate that.”

“I hope so.—My plans are not of to-day and to-morrow. I *do* aim at power, at what you call control. This is 1865. About ... well, about 1880, come to me, and see. It is not a picnic, you know, my business. There are some bad rocks ahead, and sundry whom we know are putting on far too much steam; trouble is due, not long hence, for people who tie down the safety-valve. But in good time,—well, I put it about 1880.”

“How odd that sounds. We shall be—I shall be—tottering with age by then. But now, here and now, you have some of this *power*, haven't you? I am thinking of that.”

“Oh, but we must not talk of my poor ambitions. Your question...”

“I am coming to it. And I am interested in what you call your poor ambitions, much interested.”



"I should like to think you can approve ... and further ... *all* of them. You ..."

She looked at him, then away. "One moment, please. That power of yours. See, my grandfather told me that you had more real influence with the government at Washington itself than nine-tenths of the senators and public people."

"That is a huge word!"

"But true? I am asking you because I care everything for power,—and for powerful persons. What else is there?"

He must be a highly favoured man to get such talk as this from such a woman. Yet it did not ring like love. Clearly she wanted something which he could give or do; more than clearly, he wanted herself. It was not his habit to dally with a situation. True, in business he always forced the other man to make the first proposition. This was a different affair.

"Any power I have or shall have," he began resolutely, though with a little pallor in his face, "is yours for any purpose.... No! One moment. Then you can send me off." The fire came into him now; these strong, dark men are never at such an advantage as under the stress of unwonted emotion. She looked at him with something of a new interest.

"I have no wish to send you off...."

"Wait a moment before you say that. See!



You and I loved Waltham Eliot; but it was in another world. You were a girl. I was...never mind what I was. We both now love Waltham Eliot — of that old world. But in this our own new world, now, — you another woman and I another man — I ask the woman's love. Will you give it to me?"

"I knew...I expected..." She looked at Cards dreamily for just a moment; perhaps girlhood was making its last appeal, and the old love refused to go without a sterner dismissal. "I expected this."

Cards recoiled in dismay at the commonplace coolness of the phrase, ill-boding as it was. "No," she added hastily; "don't misunderstand me. I am not trifling with you."

"My answer, then. I ask you to be my wife." The words laboured out; but they were of the quality women are fain to hear. Women; not girls, perhaps. The hot afternoon, the blinding sunlight, and the vast ripeness of things all about, touched stronger instincts. In the trite but true old phrase, Cards was hungry for this woman's love. Hunger after righteousness is a hyperbole; and if one may venture to say so, not too happy a metaphor. That old psalmist found the inevitable and only trope for spiritual yearning, and it was not hunger. Hunger asks food; and food is torn down in the chase, or else grows ripe, lus-



cious, under just such hot suns, in tempest rains, from soil rich and black. It is a far cry, but not a false cry — for the world approves it — hither from virginal dreams of sunrise upon snows, of ideals, renunciations, long quests of knighthood, the girl's lost paradise of love.... "Will you be my wife?"

She answered slowly, holding up a hand of strange warning all the while. "Yes. I think I could be your wife. A real wife." She looked at him. "I am not so cold as people may tell you. And you are a man with whom women do not trifle.... No, no, no! Wait. Wait.... There are conditions."

"Conditions!"

"Yes. You...must help me pay my debts. You are co-executor, you know...."

"Debts? Why, your estate...." Cards pulled up short at the ridiculous sound of the words. "Debts? What debts?"

"You think of none?"

"No."

"How easily men forget! And the other night...come, you have reminded me that we are not boy and girl. Hear me; and when I have finished, you can unsay, if you will, all those...those brave words about love. If you knew *how* women love! — Yes, I can be a wife, a wife proud of you and perhaps able to make you



proud of me.... But I begin no new life of that sort until the old life can be put away without shame. I begin no new life until George Clayton is brought to justice."

"Your cousin?"

"No. My husband's assassin."

Cards leaned back. He was used to a life of bargains, give and take; and this bargain, whatever its rewards, however wild it was, and whatever its source, put him on the defensive.

"You mean," and there was an involuntary frown upon his face, "that you will marry me if I shall catch that man, have him court-marshalled, and shot?"

Cards always stated propositions very clearly, both to himself and to others. This was brutal clearness. But there is also an almost insuperable objection, for men of his habit, to the vendetta. It is not one of our institutions; nor is Columba a typical American woman.... And that hunger, which Cards just now had felt so overmastering in its power, for a moment was forgotten, and the psalmist's mood came over him: the metaphor of mere appetite failed; instead there rose — however faintly he felt it — a thirst, a thirst for pure waters, found not in that rich, black soil, but on barren mountains and in silent upland forests, by gray old granite rocks,



remote from men. Now it was his turn to dominate the situation, and hers to plead.

"I belong to the Old Testament," she said with a pathetic effort for the light touch, — "or to the other things, you know. Judith; Judith was a widow. Oh, I cannot give it up! Are you a coward...? No, no. I unsay that. But I have built so on this! Will you not help me? Waltham, you know, — I thought how poor Waltham...and you and I... You and I?"

The blood of Linsey Cards still ran, however slowly, against any scheme of legalized revenge; but no longer against this woman who proposed it, who pleaded for it, who could not live without it, and who said "You and I" with such appeal, — and who, this he knew well, would insist until it was done. No compromises. And she conquered. She conquered, of course, and mainly through the cry for help. Metaphorically, she had dropped that barter and commodity from her hand, and simply stretched out her empty arms. Literally, she had leaned back a little as she appealed to him, and there was just a hint of tears. In her eyes, moreover, he saw a greater hint than that of tears. What all his subservience and ardour and desire had not done, his frown, his resistance, his assertion of superiority, had done at last; he saw in her eyes the need of him and a permanent desire for



him, the love of his strength doubled because his strength had dared to baffle her. "I will be a true wife to you," she said. The word went through and through him. He sprang toward her; and again she held up that warning arm. "You will help me? You will not leave me?"

This time there was no doubt in his answer.

To my taste, the curtain should fall here upon our comedy. But I know well what the conventions and the rules demand; and you are free to shift a rapid scene, set the stage for the piazza of a great country-house, send right and left for the other players and give rapid cues for one and all. Ring Moonby out upon the stage, that black cigar jaunty as ever in his mouth, and triumph in all the wrinkles of his face; ring in the Malstrems, dropping a visit on their afternoon stroll, although I don't think anything short of a premonition of this happy moment could have brought our plump matron through such heat; bring Horace, Aunt Mary, the daughters, Harry Harpy, all. Grandfather Nathan shall stand, blessing us, in the middle background; and, in full light, the happy pair, founders now at last of the House of Cards. Smile, people all, smile, smirk, and pose as befits the comedy's end. But I insist on one thing—hurry. Unless you look sharp, my friend, those



clouds in the west, of which I was careful to speak, will shut out our view with sheets of white tempest rain, and the crashes of thunder will drown those little human chirpings of congratulation. — But this is merely meteorological. I mean no mischief. The thunder is innocuous so far as promise of the great House is concerned. You see it standing there now; you see its founder still active, happiest and most prosperous of men; you see its children and children's children, a sane, brave race. No, if the thunder has any meaning, it is for the little tragedy which I must thrust in here, artlessly enough, as I suppose; for it has no surprises. You almost know what it is before you read it; and that is my only meaning in the clamour of storm and rain. Earth laughs with the lucky, the cunning, and the strong; but heaven, so the old stories tell us and so some of us are still fain to believe, weeps for baffled nobility of purpose, for the tragedy of simple goodness, for the lost ideals, and the great causes that are foiled by fate.



V

THE TRAGEDY OF THE FOUNDING







## I

AGAIN, dear boy, you are most considerate, refraining from question and comment. I have indeed but little time to end my task. That cockcrow meant a far glimpse of dawn, and dawn sends ghosts to their place; we have only ghosts to deal with in this bit of tragedy. We must ride fast and far with them: *die Todten reiten schnell*. Then we must ride back here to breakfast, to be near the House again, whither, indeed, you proceed in person so soon to learn your own fates.... And I am sure that after this tale, so far as it has gone, you begin to see why Cards has such an affection for you, why he wishes you in the House; do you guess now, moreover, why his wife seems to you such a sphinx,—gracious, but speaking so seldom to you, and watching, watching? I don't understand women; ask M. Bourget about them. But I understand Cards.

And how did I come at these intimate facts? Was I out in old West's garden that Sunday? What do I know of the mind of this poor Clayton, of his wild ride, after the murder, to the



Confederate lines? Well, did I not know much about that wooing, hear much about it, see some of it? Did not Cards and Kriemhild, not long after, in the shadowy days, make me almost their confessor? You see what they think of me, and what they take from me. And have I not... ahem!... a spark of the artistic and inventional about me?... As to the Virginian and what I tell you now, would to God I knew less and invented more! There are letters in yonder desk.

Somehow, as I think of Clayton spurring off southward that night, with tragedy at his heart's heart, I see the Lost Cause itself vanishing into the limbo of things that could not be. I fought those men; I would fight it all over with them to-morrow; but I respect, honour, admire them. And for Clayton I have only an infinite pity. Poor inverted patriot, I can see him mount his horse, the paper thrust into safety as if it were the fate of all his brethren given him to bear and not to share, and then ride down the pass while masses of fog creep along hillside and wood. In the blank misery of his thoughts there rang one word of consolation; "it is the cause, the cause," he kept quoting, remembering to his own surprise, certain modulations of voice with which an actor of that time mouthed the words. He knew his way, mantled as it was in fog; this region was all familiar to him. A side-road



yonder led to his old home; how well he knew the bridge down there, the old mill! A lazy current of air moved by him from the place, and he noted in the dampness, like floating wreckage, the scent of charred timbers. Gone the old house; gone the old mill. There had been a miller's daughter, of course; there always is a miller's daughter; and to his ardent emotions of fourteen, it had seemed to him that Tennyson must have written those charming verses for this very situation in Virginia. *It is the miller's daughter....* But past tense, poet, now. These ardours, we know, are brief. But past tense, did we say? Perfect, so he dimly remembered; *fruit* was the word for her as for old Troy; guerrillas had swept these parts long ago, and rumour went about that the miller's daughter had been found dead, and that it was well with her so. The vision of dead women is provocative; and Clayton had now a psychological experience, real, vivid, convincing, the kind of thing that, when it is fiction in reality and not, as here, reality in fiction, gets into treatises with discreet initial letters and scientific comment of the tremendous sort.... "G. M. C., a captain in the army, relates," — and all that. But poor Clayton comes into no treatise. — He saw, suddenly, and close before him, framed by the luminous mist, his own mother's face; but so real, so absolutely



real. She looked at him just as she did once when the doctors gave him up to typhoid fever. Her lips moved. — Yes? — He had reined his quivering horse to a stand. — She spoke words, and he heard them plain: “The promise binds no longer. Serve your state.” He caught those words to his heart, sobbed once in a kind of relief, and saw the face fade away; all about him was a slow, heavy dripping from the mist-laden leaves. He rode now hard to the southward.

Every bound of his horse meant lives saved, rescue, perhaps an honourable peace. Through mist and night he rode until light began everywhere to trample down the fog, and through all that plundered, desolate countryside sounded, in mockery of old times, faint cries and the bustle of a rural daybreak. Then, at last, shouts close before him, challenge, halt; rude hands took his bridle; his astonished captors stared hard and long at the uniform, the white-faced, haughty rider, the reeking, trembling horse.

“A deserter, — a spy. What you will. But take me to the general, — and at once.”

Headquarters were in a spacious mansion which had escaped axe and flame of border warfare. The furniture was partly gone; but enough remained for present purposes, and there were even superfluous things. In the hall stood an old suit of armour, family heirloom brought over seas and



relic of heaven knows what crusading or marauding ancestor. The lights of morning fell upon that dingy piece of mail as they had done year in, year out; but it is safe to say that they had never before fallen on such a figure as now stood close in front of it, — a man erect, unmoved, staring into space, and heedless of everything but the crumpled paper in his hand. Pale, haggard, he almost touched that armour with his back, — and so still, but for the fever and flash of his eyes. You would say that he belonged within the coat of mail, not out there upon the floor. His face should be peering from under its visor in the security of six centuries ago, when they dreamed dreams and heard voices and went on weary quests and followed nothing but beckonings from the white hand of faith or love.

An orderly came in. "The general will see you here," he said. — Let us look at poor Clayton a quarter-hour later, face to face with his illustrious host.

It is a grave countenance, — we know it in many portraits, on statues; it is a silent, reserved, but courteous manner, with that strange influence which awes while it attracts, evokes enthusiasm of masses, and chills all familiarity of the individual. Yet just now the grave eyes are not far from sympathetic moisture, and the



hand is stretched out almost as if to soothe with its touch. For all is over now, the eager revelation of great news, the crushing disillusion, the confessing, the blank gesture of despair. You remember that what this poor fellow has really done is to thwart unwittingly the last and best of the Confederate schemes for a surprise, a victory, and perhaps an honourable peace.

“I believe that God absolves you. I honour your motives, understand your struggle, and appreciate this tragic failure. I have known something of divided duties.... But what can you do? No place in our ranks, Clayton; even Arnold—forgive me!—killed no fellow-officer in his flight. Our own people are very kindly disposed toward Eliot, you know; he was a gentleman—and you remember his chivalrous treatment of Captain Sudbury, your kinsman. If it depended on me, my dear fellow, I could arrange it.... Give yourself up to the Federals? Oh, no,—no! Remember,—bear up, my boy, bear up!—remember I hold your honour to be still unstained; and when the time comes, I shall make it my duty to vindicate you. I can do nothing of that now. Let me see,—what is there?”

Clayton, who had grasped the general's hand over that precious word of “honour,” stared now at the armour by the wall; he was beginning to



care very little what could be "done." All was done, for him. All over.

"There is one way for you out of this," said the general; and Clayton looked a weary interrogation. "See. They are fighting in Mexico still. Join the French there; they will welcome your aid, and they are very friendly with us. I will give you a pass, letters, whatever you need."

"My name?"

"Ah, poor fellow; you must change it. But fight down there and forget your disappointment, your...mistake. If we are successful here, I can, I think, put you right,—we can certainly put you right here in Virginia, after the war is over."—The general looked very grave, paused, and then went on, solemnly repeating those ominous words.... "Here in Virginia, after the war is over. And if we do not succeed, though I still trust in God we shall,—if the justice of our cause fail to win the approval of Providence,—if this long and bloody war shall prove to have been in vain... then..." He paused once more.

"Then?" echoed Clayton.

"Then, sir, there will be some of us whose lot even you need not envy."



## II

LATE that afternoon, when all had been done for him in the way of letters and passes, when one or two old friends had seen him and cheered him a little in secret, when a surgeon, sent by the general, had mixed a draught, commended his chalice, and ordered the tired man into bed, nature and the medicine combined to give him unbroken slumber for a dozen solid hours. Even his thoughts had gone silent for exhaustion. He took pleasure in the bed; lauded his pillow; foolishly noted that there was no more fog; listened with childish interest to the low challenges of a sentry not far from his window; and so fell asleep. He woke up hungry, ate with relish, dressed cannily in the new clothes provided for him, and not until he was once more riding southward, away from the shifting line bordered by gray and blue, did he awake from the reaction of his tragedy and find it, black and insistent as ever, riding with him as an inseparable shadow.

It was hot and moist, this new day, the first of exile, and fever seemed to hang over the whole



land. By noon the sun blazed out in almost intolerable heat. He turned into a grove to rest, drank of the stream, and stood to watch a beetle caught in eddies and at last swept to death. Himself, then? There were other and larger waters near. No. I have told you that Clayton was in the old fashion a deeply religious man. — At night he had shelter mainly in good houses, as he passed southward and westward; but once, in storm, he had to take refuge with a negro and share the humble cabin. He did not mind that. So day by day went by in dull routine; until one morning he felt the fever on him and this time in no metaphor, but as a slow resistless fire in limbs and head and heart. He saw wild visions, and lived in constant succession of them. How many times he fought over his fight by the pass! One time it would be the truth; another time there was reconciliation, timely discovery that the papers were without value, a cheery ride back, — only he and Eliot had somehow been changed into envoys of South and North respectively, arranging terms of peace. Their photographs were in *Harper's Weekly*, under crossed flags of the two sections, as he plainly saw; and the letter-press called these two men "noble types and exemplars each of his gallant army." Hey, how the rockets blazed for peace and the established Confederacy, the new honourable alliance! And



boom, boom, went the triumphant cannon! — A negro's hut sheltered him from the heavy thunderstorm when once he woke to his plight. Another time he was preaching a funeral sermon over the good general in gray; the iron bells tolled mournfully in his brain. Then came lucid intervals, with silence; his troubles lay afar, massed like a watchful army ready to rush upon him at call. Then again the wild visions, and yet again. He made, for instance, a fine old-fashioned speech at his cousin Kriemhild's wedding, toasting the bride and welcoming the bridegroom to a southern home. Sometimes he sang plantation songs, or "spirituals" which his old "Mammy" had taught to little Marse George. Once he preached mercy and forgiveness of all our sad mortality as at a darkies' camp-meeting. But all these dreams were trivial, fugitive things compared with one that came to him as he stared at a lurid sunset sky with those eternal storm-clouds gathered low in the horizon. A great golden mass turned angel, blew trumpet as of a mighty wind; and behold it was Judgment Day, and all the earth gave up its dead of all times to meet earth's Creator for the reckoning. Souls were ranged silent in a vast amphitheatre, up, down, about, everywhere, save for the hollow space, as at the centre of things, where this Creator stood alone. Was there no recording angel; no accuser? None.



Only that solitary being; and the vast of souls was all about him. But wait! Accusers? A plenty. Soul after soul detached itself from the ranks, saint, criminal, wasteling, infant, idiot, sage, madman, and monotonously rang out one accusation after another; it was the Creator, not the creature, who stood trial there. And at last, Clayton, himself, hand in hand with Eliot, came forward to utter a double doom. Again a heavy peal of thunder aroused him, and the pouring rain.

This could not last very long; and yet there came some good of it, for now ills of his body began to absorb the terrors of his mind. Quite often, in the new mood, he laughed aloud and for long, so that scattered field-hands, or else some solitary, white-haired farmer driving a melancholy mule on errands of harvest, would look up in amazement. Women at the house where he stayed one night, the worst of all, tried to detain him there, but to no avail. In a tremble of fever and excitement, he rose from his sleepless bed, dressed with queer whistlings and hummings, declined all breakfast save a cup of coffee, and so mounted and rode away in the bright morning, lilting *Gaily the Troubadour* in airiest if tremulous and much-jolted style, after he had overwhelmed his hostess with thanks full of the stately old forms and phrases, swinging



his great soft hat, bowing low, and putting his horse to a sharp pace. Then came the collapse.

Sunset fell as he rode along a pleasant lane, ignorant altogether of his bearings as of his plight. Cows came homeward up the slope of a hill, and a house was near the crest of it, a pleasant house with a bit of garden, fairish barns, and down here, by the side of the lane, a little, old-fashioned spring-house. Water, then. He suddenly knew how vastly he wanted water. Dropping heavily from his saddle, and leaving the horse to crop grass at leisure, he walked with uncertain tread through open bars of a dilapidated fence. Roused by his steps, a great mastiff sprang from behind the tiny house and came toward him with ominous growl. Clayton scarcely heeded; he looked around for the way to water. The dog, too, stopped, looking at the stranger's face. Dogs, it is credibly affirmed, know a gentleman; and are also said to be good detectives, scenting the criminal, the evil man, the murderer. Here is mastiff's chance. What comes over the brute? It moved to Clayton's side, rubbed softly against him, looked up at him again, and then licked his hand. The man gave one sob, trembled, reeled, and sank in a swoon to the ground.

When Clayton opened his eyes, he saw what old Lear saw as the music played and Cordelia bent over his bed. A young woman, not very



beautiful, but with a kind face, with a gentle touch, now knelt by the poor fellow and bathed his temples with water from the spring. The dog stood gravely by. Clayton looked at the face above him, wondered to see tears there, and then sank into another swoon. When a second time he revived, an old man had joined the group, and a negro woman. He thought he was dying, all was so still; and he was indeed close upon death; but something within him, independent of all thought or desire, refused to die.

They carried him to the farmhouse, and in a little room, with vines about the windows and some flowers of autumn here and there, kept fresh daily, he lay and slowly recovered. Before the flowers had all gone, and frost had come to that southern country, he was half well again. Two months passed, and he was physically a sound man. He had things to ponder over, things to do; for great battles had been fought to the northward, and the only son of that simple household was killed. The mother had long been dead; and since they were a kind of immigrant in these parts, coming thither to an unexpectedly inherited farm some dozen years before, there was none of their kin to call upon. Neighbours, even, were few and distant; negroes, women, old folk, made up the bulk of these. And the old man himself now began to fail.



There was a mute plea for help in his look ; and Clayton would not leave him. The Virginian gravely helped them all in their daily round of tasks, directing such few negroes as were left on the place. He showed father and daughter the general's letter, the pass ; he told them of his errand to Mexico ; but as the old man, now dying by inches, glanced helplessly at his son's sword hanging on the wall, Clayton responded to the appeal, promising to stay through that winter, until the war was over, — say until late spring. Then came a keener test, a graver necessity. On a day of unusual frost and darkness, Clayton from his room upstairs heard hoof beats, noise of entering below, then the savage rush of the dog, a shot, a strange sound of struggling, and a cry. He ran lightly down, thinking chiefly of that sword upon the wall, and found two men in nondescript uniform ; one held the dying father by the throat, clamouring for hidden money, and the other, whatever his occupation, had short shrift of it, for he fell at the feet of the young woman. Clayton, we know, was expert with the sword. A pistol, dropped from the ruffian's hand, was opportune ; changing owners rapidly, it shot dead the murderer. Two guerillas were buried in a corner of the wood ; Ponto in the garden ; and a decent funeral followed the old man to his rest in the churchyard.



There was no other way, even if Clayton had wished to avoid an evident duty. He must marry this girl, who had saved his own life, and who loved him. "You will not leave me?" she asked, bewildered, helpless; a cry so like that later appeal of the northern widow to her generous friend, and yet so different! But first Clayton told the girl all his story.

To her it seemed the most natural thing in the world, — all heroism and duty and undeserved harshness of fate. Let Clayton paint his deed never so black, and curse the fatal stroke of the sword which struck down his comrade, she only saw a strong arm rise for the blow that saved her from something worse than death, and in Eliot she could see nothing but the Yankee colonel, the invader, leader of ruthless men. Clayton might kill twenty such, and as he pleased. But his ancient house, his name, his former wealth, all of that gave her pause; she was only a farmer's girl. She would not be a reproach to him when ... He stopped all these doubts. "It is you that marry an outcast; but I cannot leave you." Two or three old men, a dozen women, the blind parson: strangest and quietest of weddings.

A kind of eclogue, then, was outcome of that tragedy on the Virginian hills. The great horror fell back into the past; and Clayton felt the



right as well as the obligation to live; he had duty in love and love in duty. He did his best with resources of the farm, aided by money which he had taken in some quantity with him when he made resolve, on Eliot's wedding night, to ride off alone and carry the papers south. Hope, too, rose for the southern cause. Rumour of those terrible losses of the Federals in the wilderness, of the foiled advance, reached him through late spring and summer, spreading a new trust in the invincible southern arms. And then their baby came. Clayton, I have said it, was a deeply religious man; and to his mysticism this gift of heaven seemed like a seal set upon his pardon for an unpremeditated sin. Yet the war raged on; no peace settled over that bloody year; and at last, with Sherman's march, which sent waves of strange omen into the far corner where Clayton now lived his obscure life, hope grew faint again. Escape, at any rate, was now well-nigh impossible.

Winter came again; and the tidings of war, to his better judgment, told a fairly desperate tale. With spring, Federal soldiers appeared; and all the country around was under their rule. One day the wife came singing into the little parlor, her baby in her arms, to find her husband pale, but very calm, standing opposite a Union officer whose face expressed astonishment of the



liveliest variety. "My old corporal, dear. He is naturally surprised to meet me in this place. — Well, Armstrong?"

"Captain... What is it this pass calls you?"

"I am known as George Morison."

"Your wife and baby?"

"Yes. She saved my life, Armstrong. If ..."

"Hold on, Captain... Mr. Morison. That mess up there, so lucky for us, you know: that was a quarrel, a fair fight, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

"I always said so. And you *had* to fly then. And lucky, as I say, for us. — Well, good-bye. No word from me. It's not my business, anyway. You're Mr. Morison, and this is Mrs. Morison, and yon's Master Morison, — good luck to him. The war's over, thank God. Can I do anything for you?"

"Take thanks of the kind.... You know. And a northern paper or two? God bless you!"

Another good omen, that. August of the peace-year saw them still unmolested; for the government, as Armstrong assured them, was not keen on Clayton's trail, and had no wish, one might guess, to revive a history in which a certain general, now famous, had played the abject gull. No reason, then, why this isolation and this obscurity should not deepen until the exile could make arrangements of some kind



and slip with his little family out of all danger. Danger, of course, would always lurk for him within American jurisdiction; and no wonder that little incidents of the unusual sort made his nerves unsteady now and then. A fellow in civilian clothes, for example, peered about the farm one day, gave presents to the negroes, and told the old mammy, who waited upon little George, that his business was to gather material for a Household History of the War. There was Marse Richard, for example, who had been killed. So he knew about Marse Richard, did he, this affable man? Yes, but he was keenly interested in the dramatic advent of Mr. Morison, too; it was thrilling, said the stranger, and should have a page in the book, and Mammy's own name thrown in,—and the baby's, too. The baby's name was George Morison, Jr., eh? Named after his pa? And this was all very fine for Mammy. She felt less comfortable, though, when the inquisitive fellow picked up Clayton's watch, lying there on a desk, opened it, and read the inscription with what seemed a triumphant, irrepressible smile. True, he said he had been a watchmaker's assistant once, and these things interested him; but Mammy now called down Mrs. Morison. The agent for the history soon took to his heels and his gig, driving rapidly away toward the distant railroad.



That was early September. President Johnson's proclamation of Thanksgiving came with stray newspapers one day in the later autumn, and set Clayton thinking hard. The South found a grim satire in this suggestion; but our pious friend took the matter seriously to heart. He was afraid of his own happiness. He would give thanks humbly, sincerely. He thought of his grief-stricken cousin in the North, and her first peace-thanksgiving: how could he ever make her amends? He felt a vast desire to touch his past life, and explain his penitence, his real innocence, to some one. Thoughts of the old hall, I suppose, and memories of our talk in the garden, fortifying reasons of a more practical kind, moved him to write me a long letter, to me, John Heigh, and to make a clean breast of his story from end to end. Did I answer the traitor, the villain, as he deserved? I did. I wrote him in my blunt way, to lie low, very low, and to be happy, very happy. I should have added a package of toys and trash for the baby, I informed him, only I feared complications both for the baby's sire, and, considering southern campaigns, for my own spotless character. I remarked, however, that if that officer Armstrong ever came to Philadelphia, he should be looked up, and I should give him, *le nommé* Armstrong, the best dinner, the finest cigar,



these cursed, dirty greenbacks — how I did hate that money! — could buy. So I wrote. And I only shrugged my shoulders, in American equivalent of the Italian feat, when Cards told me one day in the train that detectives were on that villain Clayton's trail.

“Secret-service men?” I asked.

“Why, yes, — in a way, yes.” Cards turned somewhat red. Then John Macchiavelli Heigh did a bit of fine work. I told Cards that I should kick such detectives; that I had my opinion of folks who stirred up the weary old business now; but after all, it was government, and I was an ex-officer, and treason should be made odious (Johnson's saying), and in point of fact, I *had* heard, in roundabout but trustworthy ways, that Clayton was disguised as a mining engineer in the province of Sonora, Mexico, somewhere down by the Gulf of California. Cards stared at me. Amen.

Clayton made his holiday of Thanksgiving, after all. He wrote me some absurd, hysteric stuff; called me names; said my letter had cheered him, and put a new face on life; declared that my news of Kriemhild had given him unspeakable relief and eased his solicitude. This world, he perceived along with many acutely reasoning persons, is a world of the living and not of the dead; and if my comment on the engagement,



about which I wrote in a slightly sarcastic vein, reminded him of another old saw, he was polite enough not to refer to the advantages of a living dog over a dead lion. At any rate, — so he seemed to think, so, I know, he felt, — this widowed cousin need not come again hand in hand with that inexorable ghost to vex his dreams. Only with the dead husband had he now to do; his whole life should make amends. He would labour, so far as he could, for reconciliation of North and South, and do in poor shreds and patches of influence what Eliot might have done on the grandest scale. So he wrote me that Thanksgiving morning itself, posted the letter, and rode back to his little family, a modest present or so in hand. The boy came to the table for his first meal, their Thanksgiving dinner, sitting in a high chair and crowing with delight. And George Morison bent over to say the simple grace his fathers had always said, — *For what we are about to receive. . . .*

But they came rudely into the very dining-room, — soldiers; and the door was guarded; and an officer, not much enamoured of his present business, called Mr. George Morison to book, and by another name. “This way, you!” he cried to one without; and presently that enterprising author of a *Household History of the War* came shambling in. “Now, then! Identify your man.”



"Oh, that's him. That's Clayton. That's the Captain," said the man of letters, sedulously avoiding his victim's gaze. The baby was distinctly pleased, having an eye to effective grouping and colour.

But Clayton rose at once. He knew his hour. "Yes," he said, facing the officer, "I am Clayton; formerly a captain in the Federal army. I know your charge. Be considerate only of my wife."

"By all means." — This to Clayton. And "we don't want *you* any more," said the Major, — no other than our random acquaintance of long ago, Abner R. Slocum, the object of well-merited attention from headquarters and now rounding out his service as a volunteer with a little regular work, — while he waved off the despised informer. Clayton tenderly raised his sobbing wife and led her into the next room; baby had been haled away by his nurse, when the poor Captain came, pale and collected, back; but the literary person still held his ground.

"Hard luck for *you*, Captain," he commented, "and a nasty task for me and the Major here. But duty's duty."

"I'll thank you to speak for yourself," said Major Slocum, tartly.

"Fine enough, Major. Very fine. You put on style with this Virginian F. F. I'm the ferret, I suppose, and you're the dog, — yes. But



who backs the ferret? Eh? Not just the government, not the war department; and you know it."

"That's so, Captain," broke in the disgusted Major, "if this thing here does say it. They do tell all through the army it was a fight, — a personal affair. Technically you are all kinds of guilty; but we army men aren't hot. I think Lee has said something for you; that touches us, but it won't help you with the politicians. Stanton's a martinet, you know. It's black, Captain, black; you'll have to stand court-martial, and they've put some lawyer or other on you. I'm sorry for you; but you are a soldier, and you want to know the worst; there it is."

"Thank you, Major."

"And be good enough to keep me clear of this party, will you?"

The detective shifted his pose and his quid; then with pathetic dignity, "Cuss away," he said, "Cuss away. Cuss *me*. But you won't cuss much up North at a man like..."

"Oh, come now, come!" interjected Slocum.

— "At a man," the injured Lecocq went on, "like L. A. Cards!"

"Ah!" Clayton took a deep breath. "As a partner of that gentleman, you will kindly take him a message from me. Tell him I understand. Tell him I am going to suffer whatever justice



requires of me, but with a stout heart, and at last, a clear conscience. Give him my compliments on his excellent prospects in life. And if you tell him nothing else, tell him this: the deed now done at his instigation sends me to clasp hands, before God Almighty, with a man whom I honoured and wished well, whom I unwillingly injured, and who has long since forgiven me... but whom this self-constituted avenger has lost, and can never more call friend. Say that. — Major, I am ready to settle my account. I thank you for your straightforward kindness; I have been a soldier, too. And now you will give me — an hour? Yes? — with my wife. Thank you.”

One may read the rest of it in old newspapers of that day, but not set in very great prominence. Yet the same journals had much to say of the Cards-Eliot wedding, — which I did not attend. I was hurrying south with orders for revision of sentence, and all that: too late. Too late! But the House was now established. You know in old times no great building was thought safe or well-omened until a victim was killed in the making of it. Cards was lucky. There were two victims sacrificed for his House.

No, no. Not that tone. Don't blame Cards too much. I take back my bitter comment; and



I don't like the set of your jaw as I name the poor chap. He thought Clayton deserved death; but he did help me get those orders of revision. I cut up pretty rough, and Cards was almost on his knees to me. I don't blame him, now; and you know he did love your uncle passionately, — would have died for him. Remember that. And you can't appreciate the feeling then against southerners. Don't make the mistake so many foolish folk make in these days, of thinking such big, strong men as Cards to be bloodless, cowardly, without fire and generous instincts. I tell you deliberately, I like Cards now. I like his wife. Think it all over, — what I have read you; and get your sober idea of it, and be just to the man when you go to him on Tuesday night. Your uncle loved him; and — can't you see it, boy? — he loves you, loves you like his own son.

And now let us put out the lamp. You see, the dawn is coming. It is our twentieth century: as good, I suppose, as any other of the shabby procession since poor Anthropos began cutting with flint knives, and making his stone clubs, and piling up those kitchen-middens by the old North Sea.... It is your century, boy, not mine; and think well what you do for your part in it when you go to see one of its strongest men, and are asked to be strong with him, and



to have great opportunities. You know what men of your day are to be like, what they ought to do; my task was to show you what American men were in the days of the trial and the test. I hope you know more of them than you did.— And now let us attempt to get a little sleep; you'll *get* it—I'll do the other part.—Good night; good night. I am going to put these papers away, and sit here a few minutes alone ...with old friends.



VI

THE HOUSE DUBITANT







God rest you, merry gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay.

WHEN we reached the House on that famous election night, there was considerable bustle and stir of guests who came out over a train or two, got the latest returns by a private wire which Cards had graciously accepted for the nonce, and then went back to noisier if less trustworthy announcements at a club. Some of these visitors had quick, energetic, but low-voiced colloquy with the financier, and hurried away to despatch a message to New York or to London. A few of the wise, knowing what was good for them, held their ground and watched the great landslide as one detail of it after another came announced or guessed or heralded over the wires. It was a great victory; that we all knew early in the evening hours; but as the sweep and significance of it were revealed to the wary compiler of returns, we fairly turned boyish with enthusiasm, and hilarity reigned supreme. Crabbed, heretical old mugwump that I am, I have always believed in the man whose victory this was, and whom certain statesmen



thought at one time to have swept into obscurity. A few politicians of the more reputable class were with us; and while they cheered lustily enough, I could discern some solicitude in their delight. A nervous, fugitive old fellow came up to two of these politicians, and began to cackle heartily about the outlook for good times. "Stocks will kite, eh? Don't you think?" he asked. He was the kind of man who always wears a high silk hat of mornings, and keeps close to the ticker in a broker's office.

"Stocks? Oh, they'll jump a little. — But you'd better find out what the next message to Congress will say."

The old fellow flitted off.

"What is Dugong at now?" said one of the pair. — "I hear his daughter is just engaged."

"Mistake for the young man. She'll sell ex-dividend and ex-rights, — when the crowd are through with papa...."

"Right you are. — Hallo!" This to a glorified sort of reporter who came confidently along.

"What's the latest, Sam?"

"Illinois...."

"Oh, blank Illinois! What are our wards doing in town?"

"Great Scott! What aren't they doing?" The newspaper man wiped his brow. "Look at this precinct for a sample!" He referred to



a note-book, naming a division in one of our most savoury political wards. "Let me see," and he ran his eye down the column. "Our majority is 231."

"What? *What?*" It is Eliot who speaks, overhearing this conversation and the figures. "The whole legal registration of that division, and I know it, is just 154."

"This," said one of the wise men, laughing at Eliot's face, "is an age of wonder."

"Who runs the ward?"

The wise man named some leader, a Bill or Tom or Jim, noisome enough.

"And he holds a federal appointment, doesn't he?"

"Of course he does. And he will telegraph Washington, if he gets the chance, that his ward, by rolling up a majority that breaks all records, evinces at once its devotion to sound republican principles and also its enthusiastic belief in the Greatest American of our time."

"Does the Greatest American, who appoints this outcast to office, really wish that kind of support?"

"He'll take it." — But the man of news is already elbowing his way to Cards. He is not an ordinary Knight of the Brazen Fleece, or he would not be in the House of Cards, but an accredited representative of the great news



distributors. We listened respectfully to the dialogue. —

“Mr. Cards, I am deputed to get opinions on the election from half a dozen prominent men here in Philadelphia. I begin, of course, with you. Dictate? Rather write it out? — I’ll wait.”

“No,” said Cards, smiling. “What must be, must be. — Have you had something? That’s right. — Well! You may say ... you may say ...”

Out whipped a note-book; and the great man dictated slowly. —

“Say that while the results to hand fully justify the expectations, which many of us held most firmly and for a long time, that the people would confirm sound business policies of a sound administration, I am more particularly pleased with the rebuke, the overwhelming rebuke, which now falls upon those who talked of rottenness in our finance and corruption or rank injustice in the relations of business and legislation. The clamour against trusts will now, I believe, in some measure subside; and if there are abuses, these may safely be left to the executive and our present laws. Let us now have less talk of reform, and more work in developing the magnificent resources of our land.... Read that over, will you? — Thanks! Fix the first sentence. It’s too



involved. Thank you, — and good night! — Ah, John! I didn't see *you*, or I should not have performed in public. — Eliot, dear boy, how are you? — This is really something like! — Seriously, gentlemen; with these results, who can talk of any interest or group of interests controlling our government? A clean sweep everywhere through North and West. . . . Eh? What's this, — what's this?"

A paper was handed him hot from the wires. "Well! Gentlemen, — Missouri will probably go republican! Missouri! A break in the solid South! And Maryland, too, seems certain. The whole country is behind us."

Cards handed the slip to De Ligny, and came toward us radiant with unwonted enthusiasm. "And you've caught fire, too, I see, John! Well, old friend, this is a good day, an auspicious day. And our *young* friend?" — He fixed a keen eye upon Eliot. — "You don't see at first glance, perhaps," he went on, addressing the boy, "what all this means. Such majorities as these indicate national conviction, profound and almost universal. It is no manipulated Napoleonic *plebiscite*, — no, no. This spells a different word. Here are Lincoln's plain people to the fore again. — If only we had had this spirit abroad forty odd years ago, the rebellion itself could have been prevented."



“And where would my uncle have stood in the matter?” So Eliot, in a tone quite too grave, not to say disputatious, for such a festal hour. But that is the way with youngsters. I interposed. You see, I was distinctly optimistic that night. After all, I am hewn from old republican rock, even if I am not digged from an abolitionist pit; and this victory stirred ancient chords. Do you remember, friend, how we elected Lincoln, despite the copperheads, in 1864? Some old cronies there remembered; and I had joined them in a simple toast to “auld lang syne,” and in another simple toast to — well, I said “our country” and they said “our party”: but why quarrel over a word? In brief, I was now heart and soul with Cards in his designs upon the future of our young friend. Once in the House, his fresh energy, his sane zeal for good, would tell in every way, especially upon Cards himself. Outside the great House and alone, what could he do? I had expounded this view of the case to my silent companion as we walked over in the brisk, cold November night; and now I set forth my optimism in more general phrase for whom it might concern. John Heigh delivered himself in these words. —

“I venture to answer that question which Eliot has just put to you, Cards. Our dead friend, if now alive, would ask for time, study



the facts, and ally himself with strong elements to work for the general good. He would not play Don Quixote, I think, and attack more or less imaginary foes with antiquated weapons."

"Hear, hear!" said Malstrem. "If this gets to Washington, Major, they'll give you a diplomatic post!"

"Hold your irreverent tongue, Oss," quoth I. "No. Eliot, our old friend of the old days, would see clearly that the modern danger lies in the union of politics and business, just as the old danger lay in the union of church and state. Both parties to the unnatural alliance get harm. Take politics out of business and business out of politics."

"Start a new party with that device, John," said Cards, "and I'll join it."

"Ah!" said I. "I should like to think so. But I'll leave the leadership to Eliot the younger here. I'm changing no opinions. America's not a free country."

"Hear, hear! Cassandra's back again."

"Nonsense, Oss. My contention is still true. Democratic government, as Jefferson conceived it, is a failure. Men can't or won't govern themselves. They invariably find deputies. The deputy here, for a generation now, has been the boss,—a bad boss. Let's get a good boss, and back him. After the republic, civil wars; then



empire; and, for the empire, a good Augustus. That's modern, sensible democracy; and this election confirms it...."

"And we all accept the result, as we accept your graceful account of it, John!" said Cards. "And we want the young men with us, working where they will do the most good."

"But what shall we do without the Major's old comments on political situations?" queried De Ligny.

"Oh," said I, "you've heard my General Confession. I am tired of playing bear and doing all the snarl and growl of the neighbourhood. You see, I voted the republican ticket..."

A great applause went up.

... "For *President*," I concluded grimly. There was a laugh. Cards seized the psychological moment. Everybody was happy, the country was saved, democracy was not absolutely dead, prosperity reigned from sea to sea, and old John Heigh had come as near to throwing up the sponge of reform as any one could ask. The great man was now ready to make his proposition, and to hear Eliot's. Business, of course, came first; a powerful coalition of corporate interests was on foot, and Eliot, dealing mainly with financiers and men of mark, should have charge of the legal arrangements, incidentally claiming a share in the first division of enormous



profits. This proposition accepted, — and who could decline it? — the more intimate topic would follow; and Cards saw himself coming back arm-in-arm with one whom he could call not only partner, but son; not only son, but the avatar and new birth of this strong man's single friendship, lost in early manhood and found again at the threshold of a hale old age. No wonder that his voice vibrated with mingled pleasure and triumph. . . . "Cards," whispered one of the politicians, "must have had more on the election than was supposed." — And now the host bade us temporary good-bye.

"Gentlemen," he said, "consider yourselves absolutely at home. The returns are still pouring in, and you shall have them at once, — only excuse my presence with you for a while. I have an appointment with Mr. Eliot."

It was the manner of royalty, — and why not? Certainly this was the happiest moment in his life, as he anticipated the best of that long series of triumphs into which he had converted his energy, his perception, his skill. A solitary triumph, merely individual, is seldom sweet; under civilized conditions, humanity is capable of its highest emotions only when that indefinite quality which we call altruism is in play, and when the individual stream feels a tidal flow from social waters. Cards hesitated a fraction



of a minute, then, for the first time, used an old name. "Come... *Waltham*," he said.

The dullest of us felt what was in the air, and De Ligny put the feeling into eloquence. "See those two as they walk off together! Nineteenth-century America has won its primacy among nations by such men as our Cards; it will hold its place by the virtue of twentieth-century men like this young Eliot. An allegory!"

"Or an anachronism; have you thought of that?" Malstrem had joined us, cool as always, and with that cynical touch in his manner which is due to frequent intercourse with incorruptible and far-seeing statesmen. But why fling a word like this into peaceful talk?—"What do you mean by 'anachronism'?" queried De Ligny, as sharply as he dared.

Malstrem smiled. "Oh,—nothing, nothing. Only have none of you studied that young man? And when did Don Quixote flourish, Major? A century or so after his proper time, didn't he? Quite so. 'Twentieth century' did you say of Eliot? I think not. He seems to be engaged with the Rights of Man, and perfectability, and all that,—has got his arm crooked with Tom Jefferson's.... But dear me! I only object to the figure of speech. I dare say the show will go on as arranged. The young man may know a good father-in-law when he sees one,—and his



emotions aren't a hundred and fifty years old at any rate. — Don't mind me."

"Oss," I said in my forensic manner, but with conciliatory smiles, "let me put you straight about the boy and about the situation. De Ligny is right in his diagnosis. Cards represents the corporation idea in its early, crude, formative stage...."

"Let me thank you for Cards and myself."

"No, — listen! Business has begun everywhere as piracy and has gradually come under wholesome restraint of law. Corporations have begun and taken the field in a fashion not very remote from brigandage...."

"Now I hear my old Major again...."

"Brigandage.... But now they are to be brought under proper control. Who can be trusted with the restraint, control, guidance, and development of corporations but the corporation lawyer of a new type? There he is! Young Eliot is the type. There are nineteenth century and twentieth century clasping hands; and I thank heaven that I have lived to see the day when a brave, straight, intelligent, and well-equipped man like my young friend is to all intents and purposes taken into the House of Cards."

The politicians stared at me; De Ligny was pleased to approve my speech; and Malstrem



whistled. As a boy, Oss was always pert to a degree, rude I may say; and De Ligny was quite indignant at his ways just now. But I never minded Oss. "Come here," I said to him, "and bring me two glasses of that...only a little, you scoundrel,—a little glass. So. Now fill up, the rest of you, and drink with me to De Ligny's toast—the Allegory!"

"The Anachronism!" corrected Malstrem.

We drank with a will, adding a moderate little cheer; when in the midst of our noise, young Eliot opened the far door of the room and came in, alone.

"Well," he said to me with a strange energy of cheerfulness, "and what do you say now to Home-along?"

Malstrem slapped his leg. "Won my bet, by Jove! And carried the amendment! Where's your Allegory now?" he asked me. And then, turning to Eliot, "Young man," he cried, "I said so! You *have* ridden straight. I always wanted to see a Charge of the Light Brigade, too; and now I've seen it. You get medals, I believe, and a poem about you,—but no prize-money or that sort of thing, eh?" He put out his hand. "*Magnifique*, eh? But not war, they say. I congratulate you."

"What the deuce do you mean, Oss? And what do *you* mean, boy? *Home*, did you say?"



"I think so, Major. Thank you, Mr. Malstrom; I understand. Gentlemen, Mr. Cards begs to be excused; he is...called to his family. You are to make yourselves at home. — Come, Major, if you will; the election is safe beyond all doubt. — Good night!" He linked his arm in mine and led me out as if I were a big Newfoundland dog. He has a kind of quiet imperiousness, now and then, this young man. I grumbled one thing and the other as we got into our coats; and only when we had left the house, made nigh upon a hundred paces down the drive, and felt a cold wind in our teeth, did I find my old authority. "Here," I said, "stop! What does all this mean? What have you done?"

He stopped at my bidding. It was chill, gusty, the sky full of driving clouds with a few stars peeping out here and there; the great house, with all its lights, seemed to join in my question as it loomed up vast and solid, a rejected refuge full of cheer. — "What have you done?" —

"Well, Major, — in the full sense of the word I have declined, and, again, in the full sense of the word, with thanks."

"Declined with... You declined? Absolutely?"

"Absolutely."

"No, boy, — no! Don't say that. It's all my cursed snarling at these robbers and poli-



ticians! But I don't count Cards with them. I ought not to have.... I ought..."

"No, Major. Put it all on these shoulders of mine. I did it. In one sense I followed your counsels; what have you been reading to me, — what have you told me? — Did that story of yours decide me, you ask. Yes. Major, my name is Waltham Eliot."

"Ah, boy, boy! — How big that house looms up there! I have been unfair to Cards. No, no. This is Quixotic. Tomorrow... Eh? Well, well. — And Cards?"

"I was as considerate, as respectful, as I could be. He was not at all angry or hasty, — he seemed just baffled. He pleaded with me, sir, till I felt so...so guilty. But I couldn't yield. It was pretty solemn, Major Heigh! Pretty solemn. Of course it meant the deuce and all to me; but the queer part was that it seemed to be actual life and death with him."

"Poor Cards! Poor Cards! — I know."

"He said I reminded him of my uncle, forty odd years ago, arguing with him about enlisting for the war. 'Now,' says he, with a pathetic attempt at humour, 'it is you that won't enlist.' — 'Oh,' said I, 'but I shall enlist, Mr. Cards, — I do; and to my mind for as big a fight. Only I'm a rebel,' I said. And he got up and walked about. 'At both ends of my career,' he said,



‘my best purposes are balked because I can’t see duty as another man sees it.’ He was terribly cut up.”

“Eliot,” my voice shook a little, as we slowly made our way under those driving clouds, and the great house was left far behind us. “Eliot, I am a gray-headed, garrulous fool, as you have found out. But I am thinking of my pet, my little Kriemhild....”

“‘If she be not fair for me...’ No, no, I’ll not put *that* on. Major, that is the sting in the situation. But I shall give her the fine old soldier’s reason — *On going to the Wars*. Will she approve? Wait for me? Join me?”

“History,” I said, with an attempt to regain my old judicial manner, “does not record the reply of Lucasta. And will this child desert the House? — You have refused to enter it. You could have gone inside, — I still think you *should* have gone — and made it better. But now you’re out of it, — out of it!”

“Major,” — the boy’s tone was uncommonly grave, — “there is nothing for us to do inside that House.”

“Well, you’re out of it, sure,” I said peevishly, not choosing to follow his new lead.

“And within are...”

“None of that, you Puritan! Play fair!”

“Well, then, I’ve good company without!”



“Meaning . . . ?” . . .

“Well, the Ten Commandments. A few congressmen, and perhaps two senators. People like you, dear old friend! And — whisper it — I’ve a suspicion that our Man, this great person to whom we have paid democracy’s perilous compliment to-day, has no mind to abide within the House!”

“Heaven send it so!” I was catching fire.

“And, Major! Wait until once we young fellows have started our jolly row in the open, — see then what manner of inmates will be ready to rush out of the House, for fresh air and the new cause! Sooner or later, you know, a sound man has to break out of barroom, and gambling-hell, and all that, to find himself, to breathe deep, to play with little children, to fall to hard work. . . . Oh, they’ll come, the sound fellows. And, — Major!”

“Yes, boy?”

“Do you know, there was a look in his eye! I mean Cards. What if we got Cards himself out of the House, the founder and maker, the strong man of it? Cards himself! Do that, and into what a poor, miserable mass of thin ruin that House would fall! Major, — there’s the game!”

We stood still in the highroad. Wind, louder than before, roared by us, but the scud of clouds



had grown thin and stars were peeping out everywhere. That was the wind's work. It was the North-West wind, the wind we love, that sets strong men to the delight of breasting it and breathing it deep, but sends weaklings to the fireside,—the wind of our western world, that has called its brave message to every sound American from the first pioneer down to this eager man at my side. I saw in the dim light how his eyes glittered with that old Quixotic fire.... And then I remembered how vainly other fires like his had burned; I remembered my youth and all its hopes, its faiths, its charities, ending in a dull blur of disillusion, the fate of all dreamers and believers who walk this compromise world. I shook my head.

“You can't do it.”

“We must do it.”

It was at the cross-roads that he said this, and it came to my mind that suicides used to be buried in such a spot; here, I growled, was as arrant a *felo de se* as ever spilt his own blood and marred all that fortune had in store for him. But young Eliot breasted on into the wind. “Think, Major,” he said, “of the chances! And if we don't win, this country will not be fit to live in. Yet we are going to win!”

“Are we?” I said; “are we?” But my reply lacked that burliness of sarcasm and obsti-



nacy which I once thought indomitable. I recurred to the young man's other phrase, "We must do it." *Must* is the word of great causes. Could he win? I fell to thinking of him and his great Perhaps; and silent, busied each with his thought, we two made our way homeward, while the wind called aloud upon all the stars in the sky, and those last shreds of vapour scudded out to sea.



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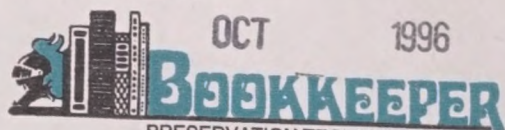
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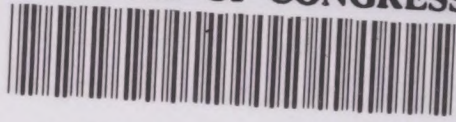
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